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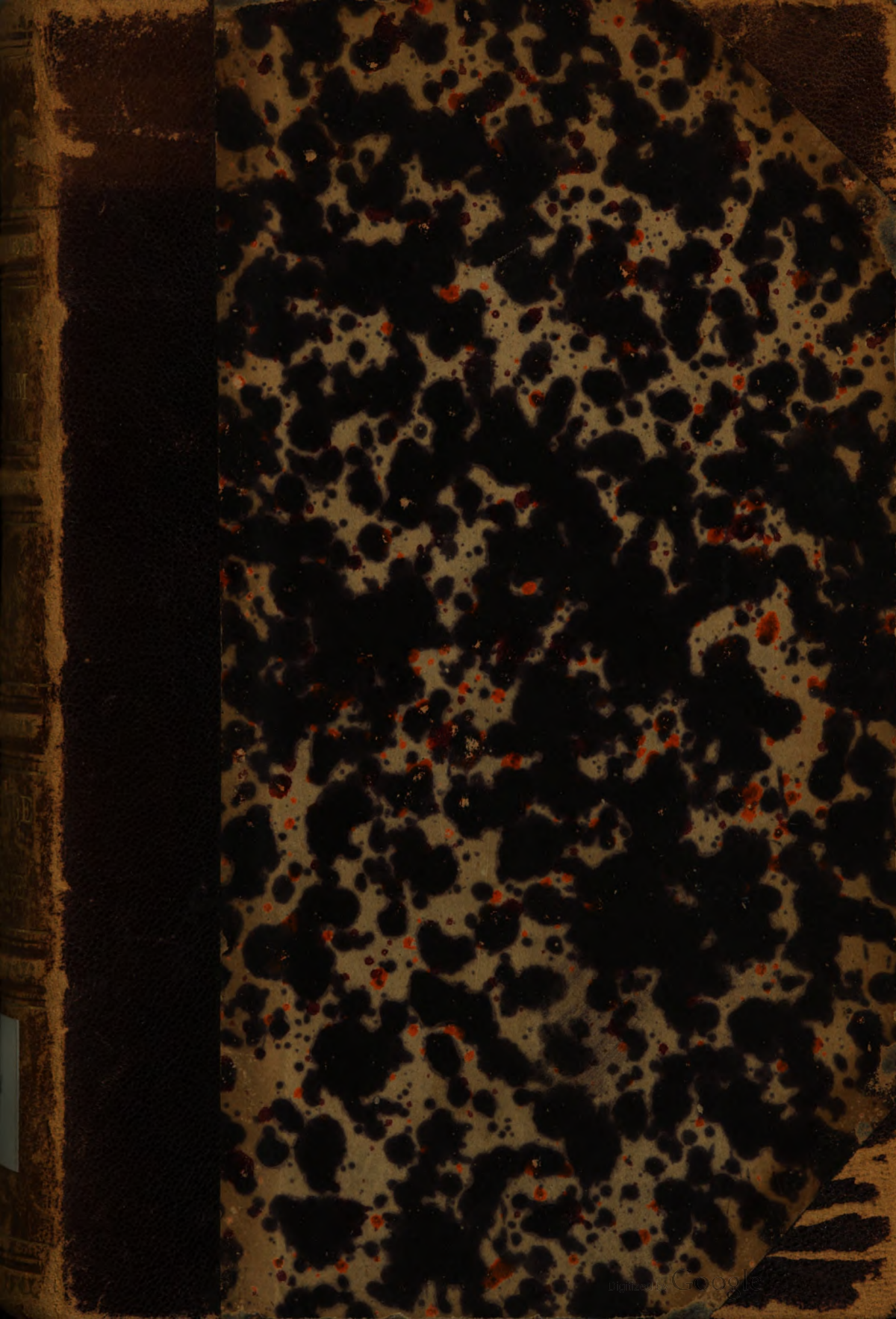
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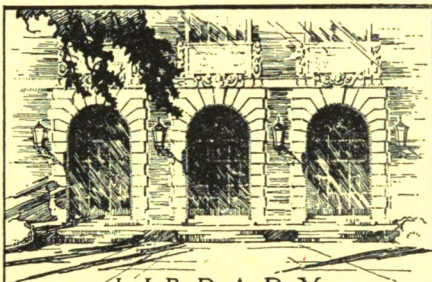
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A LEAF IN THE STORM,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY "OUIDA,"

AUTHOR OF "FOLLE FARINE," "UNDER TWO FLAGS," "IDALIA," "PUCK," ETC.

WITH TWO FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.



PHILADELPHIA
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

1872.

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A LEAF IN THE STORM,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

A PROVENCE ROSE.

PART FIRST.

I WAS a Provence rose.

A little slender rose, with leaves of shining green and blossoms of purest white—a little fragile thing, but fair, they said, growing in the casement in a chamber in a street.

I remember my birth-country well. A great wild garden, where roses grew together by millions and tens of millions, all tossing our bright heads in the light of a southern sun on the edge of an old, old city—old as Rome—whose ruins were clothed with the wild fig tree and the scarlet blossom of the climbing creepers growing tall and free in our glad air of France.

I remember how the ruined aqueduct went like a dark shadow straight across the plains; how the green and golden lizards crept in and out and about amongst the grasses; how the cicada sang her song in the moist, sultry eves; how the women from the wells came trooping by, stately as monarchs, with their water-jars upon their heads; how the hot hush of the burning noons would fall, and all things droop and sleep except ourselves; how swift amongst us would dart the little blue-winged birds, and

hide their heads in our white breasts and drink from our hearts the dew, and then hover above us in their gratitude, with sweet faint music of their wings, till sunset came.

I remember— But what is the use? I am only a rose; a thing born for a day, to bloom and be gathered, and die. So you say: you must know. God gave you all created things for your pleasure and use. So you say.

There my birth was; there I lived—in the wide south, with its strong, quivering light, its radiant skies, its purple plains, its fruits of gourd and vine. I was young; I was happy; I lived: it was enough.

One day a rough hand tore me from my parent stem and took me, bleeding and drooping, from my birth-place, with a thousand other captives of my kind. They bound a score of us up together, and made us a cruel substitute for our cool, glad garden-home with poor leaves, all wet from their own tears, and mosses torn as we were from their birth-nests under the great cedars that rose against the radiant native skies.

Then we were shut in darkness for I know not how long a space; and when we saw the light of day again we were lying with our dear dead friends, the leaves, with many flowers of various kinds, and foliage and ferns and shrubs and creeping plants, in a place quite strange to us—a place filled with other roses and with all things that bloom and bear in the rich days of midsummer; a place which I heard them call the market of the Madeleine. And when I heard that name I knew that I was in Paris.

For many a time, when the dread hand of the reaper had descended upon us, and we had beheld our fairest and most fragrant relatives borne away from us to death, a shiver that was not of the wind had run through all our boughs and blossoms, and all the roses had murmured in sadness and in terror, "Better the worm or the drought, the blight or the fly, the whirlwind that scatters us as chaff, or the waterspout that levels our proudest with the earth—better any of these than the long-lingering death by famine and faintness and thirst that awaits every flower which goes to the Madeleine."

It was an honor, no doubt, to be so chosen. A rose was the purest, the sweetest, the haughtiest of all her sisterhood ere she went thither. But, though honor is well no doubt, yet it surely is better to blow free in the breeze and to live one's life out, and to be, if forgotten by glory, yet also forgotten by pain. Nay, yet: I have known a rose, even a rose who had but one little short life of a summer day to live through and to lose, perish glad and triumphant in its prime because it died on a woman's breast and of a woman's kiss. You see there are roses as weak as men are.

I awoke, I say, from my misery and my long night of travel, with my kindred beside me in exile, on a flower-stall of the Madeleine.

It was noon—the pretty place was full of people: it was June, and the day was brilliant. A woman of Picardy sat with us on the board before her—a woman with blue eyes and ear-rings of

silver, who bound us together in fifties and hundreds into those sad gatherings of our pale ghosts which in your human language you have called "bouquets." The loveliest and greatest amongst us suffered decapitation, as your Marie Stuarts and Marie Antoinettes did, and died at once to have their beautiful bright heads impaled—a thing of death, a mere mockery of a flower—on slender spears of wire. I, a little white and fragile thing, and very young, was in no way eminent enough amongst my kind to find that martyrdom which as surely awaits the loveliest of our roses as it awaits the highest fame of your humanity.

I was bound up amongst a score of others with ropes of gardener's bass to chain me amidst my fellow-prisoners, and handed over by my jailer with the silver ear-rings to a youth who paid for us with a piece of gold—whether of great or little value I know not now. None of my own roses were with me: all were strangers. You never think, of course, that a little rose can care for its birth-place or its kindred; but you err.

O fool! Shall we not care for one another?—we who have so divine a life in common, who together sleep beneath the stars, and together sport in the summer wind, and together listen to the daybreak singing of the birds, whilst the world is dark and deaf in slumber—we who know that we are all of heaven that God, when He called away His angels, bade them leave on the sin-stained, weary, sickly earth to now and then make man remember Him!

You err. We love one another well; and if we may not live in union, we crave at least in union to droop and die. It is seldom that we have this boon. Wild flowers can live and die together; so can the poor amongst you; but we of the cultivated garden needs must part and die alone.

All the captives with me were strangers: haughty, scentless pelargoniums; gardenias, arrogant even in their woe; a knot of little, humble forget-me-nots, ashamed in the grand company of pa-

trician prisoners; a stephanalis, virgin-al and pure, whose dying breath was peace and sweetness; and many sprays of myrtle born in Rome, whose classic leaves wailed Tasso's lamentation as they went.

I must have been more loosely fettered than the rest were, for in the rough, swift motion of the youth who bore us my bonds gave way, and I fell through the silver transparency of our prison-house, and dropped stunned upon the stone pavement of a street.

There I lay long, half senseless, praying, so far as I had consciousness, that some pitying wind would rise and waft me on his wings away to some shadow, some rest, some fresh, cool place of silence.

I was tortured with thirst; I was choked with dust; I was parched with heat.

The sky was as brass, the stones as red-hot metal; the sun scorched like flame on the glare of the staring walls; the heavy feet of the hurrying crowd tramped past me black and ponderous: with every step I thought my death would come under the crushing weight of those clanging heels.

It was five seconds, five hours—which I know not. The torture was too horrible to be measured by time. I must have been already dead, or at the very gasp of death, when a cool, soft touch was laid on me: I was gently lifted, raised to tender lips, and fanned with a gentle, cooling breath—breath from the lips that had kissed me.

A young girl had found and rescued me—a girl of the people, poor enough to deem a trampled flower a treasure-trove.

She carried me very gently, carefully veiling me from sun and dust as we went; and when I recovered perception I was floating in a porcelain bath on the surface of cool, fresh water, from which I drank eagerly as soon as my sickly sense of faintness passed away.

My bath stood on the lattice-sill of a small chamber: it was, I knew afterward, but a white pan of common earthenware, such as you buy for two sous

and put in your birdcages. But no bath of ivory and pearl and silver was ever more refreshing to imperial or patrician limbs than was that little clean and snowy pattypan to me.

Under its reviving influences I became able to lift my head and raise my leaves and spread myself to the sunlight, and look round me. The chamber was in the roof, high above the traffic of the passage-way beneath: it was very poor, very simple, furnished with few and homely things. True, to all our nation of flowers it matters little, when we are borne into captivity, whether the prison-house which receives us be palace or garret. Not to us can it signify whether we perish in Sèvres vase of royal blue or in kitchen pipkin of brown ware. Your lordliest halls can seem but dark, pent, noisome dungeons to creatures born to live on the wide plain, by the sunlit meadow, in the hedgerow, or the forest, or the green, leafy garden-way; tossing always in the joyous winds, and looking always upward to the open sky.

But it is of little use to dwell on this. You think that flowers, like animals, were only created to be used and abused by you, and that we, like your horse and dog, should be grateful when you honor us by slaughter or starvation at your hands. To be brief, this room was very humble, a mere attic, with one smaller still opening from it; but I scarcely thought of its size or aspect. I looked at nothing but the woman who had saved me. She was quite young; not very beautiful, perhaps, except for wonderful soft azure eyes and a mouth smiling and glad, with lovely curves to the lips, and hair dark as a raven's wing, which was braided and bound close to her head. She was clad very poorly, yet with an exquisite neatness and even grace; for she was of the people no doubt, but of the people of France. Her voice was very melodious: she had a silver cross on her bosom; and though her face was pale, it had health.

She was my friend, I felt sure. Yes, even when she held me and pierced me

with steel and murmured over me, "They say roses are so hard to rear so, and you are such a little thing; but do grow to a tree and live with me. Surely, you can if you try."

She had wounded me sharply and thrust me into a tomb of baked red clay filled with black and heavy mould. But I knew that I was pierced to the heart that I might—though only a little offshoot gathered to die in a day—strike root of my own and be strong, and carry a crown of fresh blossoms. For she but dealt with me as your world deals with you, when your heart aches and your brain burns, and Fate stabs you, and says in your ear, "O fool! to be great you must suffer." You to your fate are thankless, being human; but I, a rose, was not.

I tried to feel not utterly wretched in that little dull clay cell: I tried to forget my sweet glad southern birth-place, and not to sicken and swoon in the noxious gases of the city air. I did my best not to shudder in the vapor of the stove, and not to grow pale in the clammy heats of the street, and not to die of useless lamentation for all that I had lost—for the noble tawny sunsets, and the sapphire blue skies, and the winds all fragrant with the almond tree flowers, and the sunlight in which the yellow orioles flashed like gold.

I did my best to be content and show my gratitude all through a parching autumn and a hateful winter; and with the spring a wandering wind came and wooed me with low, amorous whispers—came from the south, he said; and I learned that even in exile in an attic window love may find us out and make for us a country and a home.

So I lived and grew and was happy there against the small, dim garret panes, and my lover from the south came, still faithful, year by year; and all the voices round me said that I was fair—pale indeed, and fragile of strength, as a creature torn from its own land and all its friends must be; but contented and glad, and grateful to the God who made me, because I had not lived in vain, but often saw sad eyes, half

blinded with toil and tears, smile at me when they had no other cause for smiles.

"It is bitter to be mewed in a city," said once to me an old, old vine who had been thrust into the stones below and had climbed the house wall, Heaven knew how, and had lived for half a century jammed between buildings, catching a gleam of sunshine on his dusty leaves once perhaps in a whole summer. "It is bitter for us. I would rather have had the axe at my root and been burned. But perhaps without us the poorest of people would never remember the look of the fields. When they see a green leaf they laugh a little, and then weep—some of them. We, the trees and the flowers, live in the cities as those souls amongst them whom they call poets live in the world—exiled from heaven that by them the world may now and then bethink itself of God."

And I believe that the vine spoke truly. Surely, he who plants a green tree in a city way plants a thought of God in many a human heart arid with the dust of travail and clogged with the greeds of gold. So, with my lover the wind and my neighbor the vine, I was content and patient, and gave many hours of pleasure to many hard lives, and brought forth many a blossom of sweetness in that little nook under the roof.

Had my brothers and sisters done better, I wonder, living in gilded balconies or dying in jeweled hands?

I cannot say: I can only tell of myself.

The attic in which I found it my fate to dwell was very high in the air, set in one of the peaked roofs of the quarter of the Luxembourg, in a very narrow street, populous and full of noise, in which people of all classes, except the rich, were to be found—in a medley of artists, students, fruit-sellers, workers in bronze and ivory, seamstresses, obscure actresses, and all the creators, male and female, of the thousand and one airy arts of elegant nothingness which a world of pleasure demands as imperatively as a world of labor demands its bread.

It would have been a street horrible and hideous in any city save Rome or Paris: in Rome it would have been saved by color and antiquity—in Paris it was saved by color and grace. Just a flash of a bright drapery, just a gleam of a gay hue, just some tender pink head of a hydrangea, just some quaint curl of some gilded woodwork, just the green glimmer of my friend the vine, just the snowy sparkle of his neighbor the water-spout,—just these, so little and yet so much, made the crooked passage a bearable home, and gave it a kinship with the glimpse of the blue sky above its pent roofs.

O wise and true wisdom! to redeem poverty with the charms of outline and of color, with the green bough and the song of running water, and the artistic harmony which is as possible to the rough-hewn pine-wood as in the polished ebony. "It is of no use!" you cry. O fools! Which gives you perfume—we, the roses, whose rich hues and matchless grace no human artist can imitate, or the rose-trémière, which mocks us, standing stiff and gaudy and scentless and erect? Grace and pure color and cleanliness are the divinities that redeem the foulness and the ignorance and the slavery of your crushed, coarse lives when you have sight enough to see that they are divine.

In my little attic, in whose window I have passed my life, they were known gods and honored; so that, despite the stovepipe, and the poverty, and the little ill-smelling candle, and the close staircase without, with the rancid oil in its lamps and its fetid faint odors, and the refuse, and the gutters, and the gas in the street below, it was possible for me, though a rose of Provence and a rose of the open air freeborn, to draw my breath in it and to bear my blossoms, and to smile when my lover the wind roused me from sleep with each spring, and said in my ear, "Arise! for a new year is come." Now, to greet a new year with a smile, and not a sigh, one must be tranquil, at least, if not happy.

Well, I and the lattice, and a few

homely plants of saxafrage and musk and balsam who bloomed there with me, and a canary who hung in a cage amongst us, and a rustic creeper who clung to a few strands of strained string and climbed to the roof and there talked all day to the pigeons,—we all belonged to the girl with the candid sweet eyes, and by name she was called Lili Kerrouel, and for her bread she gilded and colored those little cheap boxes for sweetmeats that they sell in the wooden booths at the fairs on the boulevards, while the mirlitons whirl in their giddy go-rounds and the merry horns of the charlatans challenge the populace. She was a girl of the people: she could read, but I doubt if she could write. She had been born of peasant parents in a Breton hamlet, and they had come to Paris to seek work, and had found it for a while and prospered; and then had fallen sick and lost it, and struggled for a while, and then died, running the common course of so many lives amongst you. They had left Lili alone at sixteen, or rather worse than alone—with an old grandam, deaf and quite blind, who could do nothing for her own support, but sat all day in a wicker chair by the lattice or the stove, according as the season was hot or cold, and mumbled a little inarticulately over her worn wooden beads.

Her employers allowed Lili to bring these boxes to decorate at home, and she painted at them almost from dawn to night. She swept, she washed, she stewed, she fried, she dusted; she did all the housework of her two little rooms; she tended the old woman in all ways; and she did all these things with such cleanliness and deftness that the attics were wholesome as a palace; and though her pay was very small, she yet found means and time to have her linen spotless and make her pots and pans shine like silver and gold, and to give a grace to all the place, with the song of a happy bird and the fragrance of flowers that blossomed their best and their sweetest for her sake, when they would fain have withered to the root and died in their vain longing for the

pure breath of the fields and the cool of a green woodland world.

It was a little, simple, hard life, no doubt—a life one would have said scarce worth all the trouble it took to get bread enough to keep it going. A hard life, coloring always the same eternal little prints all day long, no matter how sweet the summer day might be, or how hot the tired eyes.

A hard life, with all the wondrous, glorious, wasteful, splendid life of the beautiful city around it in so terrible a contrast; with the roll of the carriages day and night on the stones beneath, and the pattering of the innumerable feet below, all hurrying to some pleasure, and every moment some burst of music or some chime of bells or some ripple of laughter on the air. A hard life, sitting one's self in a little dusky garret in the roof, and straining one's sight for two sous an hour, and listening to an old woman's childish mutterings and reproaches, and having always to shake the head in refusal of the neighbors' invitations to a day in the woods or a sail on the river. A hard life, no doubt, when one is young and a woman, and has soft, shining eyes and a red, curling mouth.

And yet Lili was content.

Content, because she was a French girl; because she had always been poor, and thought two sous an hour, riches; because she loved the helpless old creature whose senses had all died while her body lived on; because she was an artist at heart, and saw beautiful things round her even when she scoured her brasses and washed down her bare floor.

Content, because with it all she managed to gather a certain "sweetness and light" into her youth of toil; and when she could give herself a few hours' holiday, and could go beyond the barriers, and roam a little in the wooded places, and come home with a knot of primroses or a plume of lilac in her hands, she was glad and grateful as though she had been given gold and gems.

Ah! In the lives of you who have wealth and leisure we, the flowers, are

but one thing among many: we have a thousand rivals in your porcelains, your jewels, your luxuries, your intaglios, your mosaics, all your treasures of art, all your baubles of fancy. But in the lives of the poor we are alone: we are all the art, all the treasure, all the grace, all the beauty of outline, all the purity of hue that they possess: often we are all their innocence and all their religion too.

Why do you not set yourselves to make us more abundant in those joyless homes, in those sunless windows?

Now, this street of hers was very narrow: it was full of old houses, that nodded their heads close together as they talked, like your old crones over their fireside gossip.

I could, from my place in the window, see right into the opposite garret window. It had nothing of my nation in it, save a poor colorless stone-wort, who got a dismal living in the gutter of the roof, yet who too, in his humble way, did good and had his friends, and paid the sun and the dew for calling him into being. For on that rain-pipe the little dusty, thirsty sparrows would rest and bathe and plume themselves, and bury their beaks in the pale stone-crop, and twitter with one another joyfully, and make believe that they were in some green and amber meadow in the country in the cowslip time.

I did not care much for the stone-crop or the sparrows; but in the third summer of my captivity there with Lili the garret casement opposite stood always open, as ours did, and I could watch its tenant night and day as I chose.

He had an interest for me.

He was handsome, and about thirty years old; with a sad and noble face, and dark eyes full of dreams, and cheeks terribly hollow, and clothes terribly threadbare.

He thought no eyes were on him when my lattice looked dark, for his garret, like ours, was so high that no glance from the street ever went to it. Indeed, when does a crowd ever pause to look at a garret, unless by chance a man

have hanged himself out of its window? That in thousands of garrets men may be dying by inches for lack of bread, lack of hope, lack of justice, is not enough to draw any eyes upward to them from the pavement.

He thought himself unseen, and I watched him many a long hour of the summer night when I sighed at my square open pane in the hot, sulphurous mists of the street, and tried to see the stars and could not. For, between me and the one small breadth of sky which alone the innumerable roofs left visible, a vintner had hung out a huge gilded imperial crown as a sign on his roof-tree; and the crown, with its sham gold turning black in the shadow, hung between me and the planets.

I knew that there must be many human souls in a like plight with myself, with the light of heaven blocked from them by a gilded tyranny, and yet I sighed and sighed and sighed, thinking of the white pure stars of Provence throbbing in her violet skies.

A rose is hardly wiser than a poet, you see: neither rose nor poet will be comforted, and be content to dwell in darkness because a crown of tinsel swings on high.

Well, not seeing the stars as I strove to do, I took refuge in sorrow for my neighbor. It is well for your poet when he turns to a like resource. Too often I hear he takes, instead, to the wine-cellar which yawns under the crown that he curses.

My neighbor, I soon saw, was poorer even than we were. He was a painter, and he painted beautiful things. But his canvases and the necessities of his art were nearly all that his empty attic had in it; and when, after working many hours with a wretched glimmer of oil, he would come to his lattice and lean out, and try as I had tried to see the stars, and fail as I had failed, I saw that he was haggard, pallid and weary unto death with two dire diseases—hunger and ambition.

He could not see the stars because of the crown, but in time, in those long midsummer nights, he came to see a

little glowworm amongst my blossoms, which in a manner, perhaps, did nearly as well.

He came to notice Lili at her work. Often she had to sit up half the night to get enough coloring done to make up the due amount of labor; and she sat at her little deal table, with her little feeble lamp, with her beautiful hair coiled up in a great knot and her pretty head drooping so wearily—as we do in the long days of drought—but never once looking off, nor giving way to rebellion or fatigue, though from the whole city without there came one ceaseless sound, like the sound of an endless sea; which truly it was—the sea of pleasure.

Not for want of coaxings, not for want of tempters, various and subtle, and dangers often and perilously sweet, did Lili sit there in her solitude earning two sous an hour with straining sight and aching nerves that the old paralytic creature within might have bed and board without alms. Lili had been sore beset in a thousand ways, for she was very fair to see; but she was proud and she was innocent, and she kept her courage and her honor; yea, though you smile—though she dwelt under an attic roof, and that roof a roof of Paris.

My neighbor, in the old gabled window over the way, leaning above his stone-wort, saw her one night thus at work by her lamp, with the silver earrings, that were her sole heirloom and her sole wealth, drooped against the soft hues and curves of her graceful throat.

And when he had looked once, he looked every night, and found her there; and I, who could see straight into his chamber, saw that he went and made a picture of it all—of me, and the bird in the cage, and the little old dusky lamp, and Lili with her silver ear-rings and her pretty, drooping head.

Every day he worked at the picture, and every night he put his light out and came and sat in the dark square of his lattice, and gazed across the street through my leaves and my blossoms at my mistress. Lili knew nothing of this watch which he kept on her: she had

put up a little blind of white network, and she fancied that it kept out every eye when it was up; and often she took even that away, because she had not the heart to deprive me of the few faint breezes which the sultry weather gave us.

She never saw him in his dark hole in the old gable there, and I never betrayed him—not I. Roses have been the flowers of silence ever since the world began. Are we not the flowers of love?

"Who is he?" I asked of my gossip the vine. The vine had lived fifty years in the street, and knew the stories and sorrows of all the human bees in the hive.

"He is called René Claude," said the vine. "He is a man of genius. He is very poor."

"You use synonyms," murmured the old balsam who heard.

"He is an artist," the vine continued. "He is young. He comes from the south. His people are guides in the Pyrenees. He is a dreamer of dreams. He has taught himself many things. He has eloquence too. There is a little club at the back of the house which I climb over. I throw a tendril or two in at the crevices and listen. The shutters are closed. It is forbidden by law for men to meet so. There René speaks by the hour, superbly. Such a rush of words, such a glance, such a voice, like the roll of musketry in anger, like the sigh of music in sadness! Though I am old, it makes the little sap there is left in me thrill and grow warm. He paints beautiful things too; so the two swallows say who build under his eaves; but I suppose it is not of much use: no one believes in him, and he almost starves. He is young yet, and feels the strength in him, and still strives to do great things for the world that does not care a jot whether he lives or dies. He will go on so a little longer. Then he will end like me. I used to try and bring forth the best grapes I could, though they had shut me away from any sun to ripen them and any dews to cleanse the dust from them. But no

one cared. No one gave me a drop of water to still my thirst, nor pushed away a brick to give me a ray more of light. So I ceased to try and produce for their good; and I only took just so much trouble as would keep life in me myself. It will be the same with this man."

I, being young and a rose, the flower loved of the poets, thought the vine was a cynic, as many of you human creatures grow to be in the years of your age when the leaves of your life fall sere. I watched René long and often. He was handsome, he suffered much; and when the night was far spent he would come to his hole in the gable and gaze with tender, dreaming eyes past my pale foliage to the face of Lili. I grew to care for him, and I disbelieved the prophecy of the vine; and I promised myself that one summer or another, near or far, the swallows, when they came from the tawny African world to build in the eaves of the city, would find their old friend flown and living no more in a garret, but in some art-palace where men knew his fame.

So I dreamed—I, a little white rose, exiled in the passage of a city, seeing the pale moonlight reflected on the gray walls and the dark windows, and trying to cheat myself by a thousand fancies into the faith that I once more blossomed in the old sweet leafy garden-ways in Provence.

One night—the hottest night of the year—Lili came to my side by the open lattice. It was very late: her work was done for the night. She stood a moment, with her lips rested softly on me, looking down on the pavement that glistened like silver in the sleeping rays of the moon.

For the first time she saw the painter René watching her from his niche in the gable, with eyes that glowed and yet were dim.

I think women foresee with certain prescience when they will be loved. She drew the lattice quickly to, and blew the lamp out: she kissed me in the darkness. Because her heart was glad or sorry? Both, perhaps.

Love makes one selfish. For the first time she left my lattice closed all through the oppressive hours until day-break.

"Whenever a woman sees anything out of her window that makes her eager to look again, she always shuts the shutter. Why, I wonder?" said the balsam to me.

"That she may peep unsuspected through a chink," said the vine round the corner, who could overhear.

It was profane of the vine, and in regard to Lili untrue. She did not know very well, I dare say, why she withdrew herself on that sudden impulse, as the pimpernel shuts itself up at the touch of a raindrop.

But she did not stay to look through a crevice: she went straight to her little narrow bed, and told her beads and prayed, and slept till the cock crew in a stable near and the summer day-break came.

She might have been in a chamber all mirror and velvet and azure and gold in any one of the ten thousand places of pleasure, and been leaning over gilded balconies under the lime leaves, tossing up little paper balloons in the air for gay wagers of love and wine and jewels. Pleasure had asked her more than once to come down from her attic and go with its crowds; for she was fair of feature and lithe of limb, though only a work-girl of Paris. And she would not, but slept here under the eaves, as the swallows did.

"We have not seen enough, little rose, you and I," she would say to me with a smile and a sigh. "But it is better to be a little pale, and live a little in the dark, and be a little cramped in a garret window, than to live grand in the sun for a moment, and the next to be tossed away in a gutter. And one can be so happy anyhow—almost anyhow!—when one is young. If I could only see a very little piece more of the sky, and get every Sunday out to the dear woods, and live one floor lower, so that the winters were not quite so cold and the summers not quite so hot, and find a little more time to go to mass

in the cathedral, and be able to buy a pretty blue-and-white home of porcelain for you, I should ask nothing more of the blessed Mary—nothing more upon earth."

She had had the same simple bead-roll of innocent wishes ever since the first hour that she had raised me from the dust of the street; and it would, I doubt not, have remained her only one all the years of her life, till she should have glided down into a serene and cheerful old age of poverty and labor under that very same roof, without the blessed Mary ever deigning to hearken or answer. Would have done so if the painter René could have seen the stars, and so had not been driven to look instead at the glowworm through my leaves.

But after that night on which she shut to the lattice so suddenly, I think the bead-roll lengthened—lengthened, though for some time the addition to it was written on her heart in a mystical language which she did not try to translate even to herself—I suppose fearing its meaning.

René made approaches to his neighbor's friendship soon after that night. He was but an art-student, the son of a poor mountaineer, and with scarce a thing he could call his own except an easel of deal, a few plaster casts and a bed of straw. She was but a working-girl, born of Breton peasants, and owning as her sole treasures two silver earrings and a white rose.

But for all that, no courtship could have been more reverential on the one side or fuller of modest grace on the other if the scene of it had been a palace of princes or a château of the nobles.

He spoke very little.

The vine had said that at the club round the corner he was very eloquent, with all the impassioned and fierce eloquence common to men of the south. But with Lili he was almost mute. The vine, who knew human nature well—as vines always do, since their juices unlock the secret thoughts of men and bring to daylight their darkest passions—the vine said that such silence in one

by nature eloquent showed the force of his love and its delicacy.

This may be so: I hardly know. My lover the wind, when he is amorous, is loud, but then it is true his loves are not often very constant.

René chiefly wooed her by gentle service. He brought her little lovely wild flowers, for which he ransacked the woods of St. Germain and Meudon. He carried the billets of her fire-wood up the seven long, twisting, dirty flights of stairs. He fought for her with the wicked old portress at the door down stairs. He played to her in the gray of the evening on a quaint simple flute, a relic of his boyhood, the sad, wild, touching airs of his own southern mountains—played at his open window while the lamps burned through the dusk, till the people listened at their doors and casements and gathered in groups in the passage below, and said to one another, "How clever he is!—and he starves."

He did starve very often, or at least he had to teach himself to keep down hunger with a morsel of black chaff-bread and a stray roll of tobacco. And yet I could see that he had become happy.

Lili never asked him within her door. All the words they exchanged were from their open lattices, with the space of the roadway between them.

I heard every syllable they spoke, and they were on the one side most innocent and on the other most reverential. Ay, though you may not believe it—you who know the people of Paris from the travesties of theatres and the slanders of salons.

And all this time secretly he worked on at her portrait. He worked out of my sight and hers, in the inner part of his garret, but the swallows saw and told me. There are never any secrets between birds and flowers.

We used to live in Paradise together, and we love one another as exiles do; and we hold in our cups the raindrops to slake the thirst of the birds, and the birds in return bring to us from many lands and over many waters tidings of those lost ones who have been torn

from us to strike the roots of our race in far-off soils and under distant suns.

Late in the summer of the year, one wonderful fête-day, Lili did for once get out to the woods, the old kindly green woods of Vincennes.

A neighbor on a lower floor, a woman who made poor scentless, senseless, miserable imitations of all my race in paper, sat with the old bedridden grandmother while Lili took her holiday—so rare in her life, though she was one of the motes in the bright champagne of the dancing air of Paris. I missed her sorely on each of those few sparse days of her absence, but for her I rejoiced.

"*Je reste: tu t'en vas*," says the rose to the butterfly in the poem; and I said so in my thoughts to her.

She went to the broad level grass, to the golden fields of the sunshine, to the sound of the bees murmuring over the wild purple thyme, to the sight of the great snowy clouds slowly sailing over the sweet blue freedom of heaven—to all the things of my birth-right and my deathless remembrance—all that no woman can love as a rose can love them.

But I was not jealous; nay, not though she had cramped me in a little earth-bound cell of clay: I envied wistfully indeed, as I envied the swallows their wings which cleft the air, asking no man's leave for their liberty. But I would not have maimed a swallow's pinion had I had the power, and I would not have abridged an hour of Lili's freedom. Flowers are like your poets: they give ungrudgingly, and, like all lavish givers, are seldom recompensed in kind.

We cast all our world of blossom, all our treasury of fragrance, at the feet of the one we love; and then, having spent ourselves in that too abundant sacrifice, you cry, "A yellow, faded thing!—to the dust-hole with it!" and root us up violently and fling us to rot with the refuse and offal; not remembering the days when our burden of beauty made sunlight in your darkest places, and brought the odors of a lost paradise to breathe over your bed of fever.

Well, there is one consolation. Just

so likewise do you deal with your human wonder-flower of genius.

Lili went for her day in the green midsummer world—she and a little blithe, happy-hearted group of young work-people—and I stayed in the garret window, hot and thirsty, and drooping and pale, choked by the dust that drifted up from the pavement, and hearing little all day long save the quarrels of the sparrows and the whirr of the engine-wheels in a baking-house close at hand.

For it was some great day or other, when all Paris was out *en fête*, and every one was away from his or her home, except such people as the old bedridden woman and the cripple who watched her. So, at least, the white roof-pigeons told me, who flew where they listed, and saw the whole splendid city beneath them—saw all its glistening of arms and its sheen of palace roofs, all its gilded domes and its white, wide squares, all its crowds, many-hued as a field of tulips, and its flashing eagles golden as the sun.

When I had been alone two hours, and whilst the old building was silent and empty, there came across the street from his own dwelling-place the artist René, with a parcel beneath his arm.

He came up the stairs with a light, noiseless step, and pushed open the door of our attic. He paused on the threshold a moment, with the sort of reverent, hushed look on his face that I had seen on the faces of one or two swarthy, bearded, scarred soldiers as they paused before the picinas at the door of the little chapel which stood in my sight on the other side of our street.

Then he entered, placed that which he carried on a wooden chair fronting the light, uncovered it, and went quietly out again, without the women in the inner closet hearing him.

What he had brought was the canvas I had seen grow under his hand, the painting of me and the lamp and Lili. I do not doubt how he had done it: it was surely the little attic window, homely and true in likeness, and yet he had glorified us all, and so framed in my leaves and my white flowers, the low

oil flame and the fair head of my mistress, that there was that in the little picture which made me tremble and yet be glad. On a slender slip of paper attached to it there was written, "Il n'y a pas de nuit sans étoile."

Of him I saw no more. The picture kept me silent company all that day.

At evening Lili came. It was late. She brought with her a sweet, cool perfume of dewy mosses and fresh leaves and strawberry plants—sweet as honey. She came in with a dark, dreamy brilliance in her eyes and long coils of foliage in her hands.

She brought to the canary chickweed and a leaf of lettuce. She kissed me and laid wet mosses on my parching roots, and fanned me with the breath of her fresh lips. She took to the old women within a huge cabbage leaf full of cherries, having, I doubt not, gone herself without in order to bring the ruddy fruit to them.

She had been happy, but she was very quiet. To those who love the country as she and I did, and, thus loving it, have to dwell in cities, there is as much of pain, perhaps, as of pleasure in a fleeting glimpse of the lost heaven.

She was tired, and sat for a while, and did not see the painting, for it was dusk. She only saw it when she rose and turned to light the lamp: then, with a little shrill cry, she fell on her knees before it in her wonder and her awe, and laughed and sobbed a little, and then was still again, looking at this likeness of herself.

The written words took her long to spell out, for she could scarcely read, but when she had mastered them, her head sank on her breast with a flush and a smile, like the glow of the dawn over Provence, I thought.

She knew whence it came, no doubt, though there were many artists and students of art in that street.

But then there was only one who had watched her night after night as men watched the stars of old to read their fates in the heavens.

Lili was only a young *ouvrière*, she

was only a girl of the people: she had quick emotions and innocent impulses; she had led her life straightly because it was her nature, as it is of the lilies—her namesakes, my cousins—to grow straight to the light, pure and spotless. But she was of the populace: she was frank, fearless and strong, despite all her dreams. She was glad, and she sought not to hide it. With a gracious impulse of gratitude she turned to the lattice and leaned past me, and looked for my neighbor.

He was there in the gloom: he strove not to be seen, but a stray ray from a lamp at the vintner's gleamed on his handsome dark face, lean and pallid and yearning and sad, but full of force and of soul like a head of Rembrandt's. Lili stretched her hands to him with a noble, candid gesture and a sweet, tremulous laugh: "What you have given me!—it is you?—it *is* you?"

"Mademoiselle forgives?" he murmured, leaning as far out as the gable would permit. The street was still deserted, and very quiet. The theatres were all open to the people that night free, and bursts of music from many

quarters rolled in through the sultry darkness.

Lili colored over all her fair pale face, even as I have seen my sisters' white breasts glow to a wondrous wavering warmth as the sun of the west kissed them. She drew her breath with a quick sigh. She did not answer him in words, but with a sudden movement of exquisite eloquence she broke from me my fairest and my last-born blossom and threw it from her lattice into his.

Then, as he caught it, she closed the lattice with a swift, trembling hand, and left the chamber dark, and fled to the little sleeping-closet where her crucifix and her mother's rosary hung together above her bed.

As for me, I was left bereaved and bleeding. The dew which waters the growth of your human love is usually the tears or blood of some martyred life.

I loved Lili.

I prayed, as my torn stem quivered and my fairest begotten sank to her death in the night and the silence, that I might be the first and the last to suffer from the human love born that night. I, a rose—Love's flower.

[END OF PART FIRST.]



PART SECOND.

NOW, before that summer was gone, these two were betrothed to one another, and my little fair dead daughter, all faded and scentless though her half-opened leaves were, remained always on René's heart as a tender and treasured relic.

They were betrothed, I say—not wedded, for they were so terribly poor.

Many a day he, I think, had not so much as a crust to eat; and there passed many weeks when the works on his canvas stood unfinished because he had not wherewithal to buy the oils and the colors to finish them.

René was frightfully poor, indeed; but then, being an artist and a poet, and the lover of a fair and noble woman, and a dreamer of dreams, and a man God-gifted, he was no longer wretched. For the life of a painter is beautiful when he is still young, and loves truly, and has a genius in him stronger than all calamity, and hears a voice in which he believes say always in his ear, "Fear nothing. Men must believe as I do in thee, one day. And meanwhile we can wait!" And a painter in Paris, even though he starve on a few sous a day, can have so much that is lovely and full of picturesque charm in his daily pursuits: the long, wondrous galleries full of the arts he adores; the "*réalité de l'idéal*" around him in that perfect world; the slow, sweet studious hours in the calm wherein all that is great in humanity alone survives; the trance—half adoration, half aspiration, at once desire and despair—before the face of the Mona Lisa; then, without, the streets so glad and so gay in the sweet, living sunshine; the quiver of green leaves among gilded balconies; the groups at every turn about the doors; the glow of color in market-place and

peopled square; the quaint gray piles in old historic ways; the stones, from every one of which some voice from the imperishable Past cries out; the green, silent woods, the little leafy villages, the winding waters garden girt; the forest heights, with the city gleaming and golden in the plain;—all these are his. With these—and youth—who shall dare say he is not rich—ay, though his board be empty and his cup be dry?

I had not loved Paris—I, a little imprisoned rose, caged in a clay pot, and seeing nothing but the sky-line of the roofs. But I grew to love it, hearing from René and from Lili of all the poetry and gladness that Paris made possible in their young and burdened lives, and which could have been thus possible in no other city of the earth.

City of Pleasure you have called her, and with truth; but why not also City of the Poor? for that city, like herself, has remembered the poor in her pleasure, and given to them, no less than to the richest, the treasure of her laughing sunlight, of her melodious music, of her gracious hues, of her million flowers, of her shady leaves, of her divine ideals.

O world! when you let Paris die you will let your last youth die with her! Your rich will mourn a paradise deserted, but your poor will have need to weep with tears of blood for the ruin of the sole Eden whose sunlight sought them in their shadow, whose music found them in their loneliness, whose glad green ways were open to their tired feet, whose radiance smiled the sorrow from their aching eyes, and in whose wildest errors and whose vainest dreams their woes and needs were unforgotten.

Well, this little, humble love-idyl,

which grew into being in an attic, had a tender grace of its own; and I watched it with tenderness, and it seemed to me fresh as the dews of the morning in the midst of the hot, stifling world.

They could not marry: he had nothing but famine for his wedding-gift, and all the little that she made was taken for the food and wine of the bedridden old grandam in that religious execution of a filial duty which is so habitual in the French family-life that no one dreams counting it as a virtue.

But they spent their leisure-time together: they passed their rare holiday hours in each other's society in the woods which they both loved or in the public galleries of art; and when the autumn came on apace, and they could no longer sit at their open casements, he still watched the gleam of her pale lamp as a pilgrim the light of a shrine, and she, ere she went to her rest, would push ajar the closed shutter and put her pretty fair head into the darkling night, and waft him a gentle good-night, and then go and kneel down by her bed and pray for him and his future before the cross which had been her dead mother's.

On that bright summer a hard winter followed. The poor suffered very much; and I in the closed lattice knew scarcely which was the worse—the icy, shivering chills of the snow-burdened air, or the close, noxious suffocation of the stove.

I was very sickly and ill, and cared little for my life during that bitter cold weather, when the panes of the lattice were all blocked from week's end to week's end with the solid silvery foliage of the frost.

René and Lili both suffered greatly: he could only keep warmth in his veins by the stoves of the public libraries, and she lost her work in the box trade after the New Year fairs, and had to eke out as best she might the few francs she had been able to lay back in the old brown pipkin in the closet. She had moreover to sell most of the little things in her garret: her own mattress went, though she kept the bed under her grandmother. But there were two

things she would not sell, though for both was she offered money: they were her mother's reliques and myself.

She would not, I am sure, have sold the picture, either. But for that no one offered her a centime.

One day, as the last of the winter solstice was passing away, the old woman died.

Lili wept for her sincere and tender tears, though never in my time, nor in any other, I believe, had the poor old querulous, paralytic sufferer rewarded her with anything except lamentation and peevish discontent.

"Now you will come to me?" murmured her lover, when they had returned from laying the old dead peasant in the quarter of the poor.

Lili drooped her head softly upon his breast.

"If you wish it!" she whispered, with a whisper as soft as the first low breath of summer.

If he wished it!

A gleam of pale gold sunshine shone through the dulled panes upon my feeble branches; a little timid fly crept out and spread its wings; the bells of the church rang an angelus; a child laughed in the street below; there came a smile of greenness spreading over the boughs of leafless trees; my lover the wind returned from the south, fresh from desert and ocean, with the scent of the spice groves and palm aisles of the East in his breath, and softly unclosing my lattice, murmured to me, "Didst thou think I was faithless? See, I come with the spring!"

So, though I was captive and they two were poor, yet we three were all happy; for love and a new year of promise were with us.

I bore a little snowy blossom (sister to the one which slept lifeless on René's heart) that spring, whilst yet the swallows were not back from the African gardens, and the first violets were carried in millions through the streets—the only innocent imperialists that the world has ever seen.

That little winter-begotten darling of mine was to be Lili's nuptial-flower.

She took it so tenderly from me that it hardly seemed like its death.

"My little dear rose, who blossoms for me, though I can only cage her in clay, and only let her see the sun's rays between the stacks of the chimneys!" she said softly over me as she kissed me; and when she said that, could I any more grieve for Provence?

"What do they wed upon, those two?" said the old vine to me.

And I answered him: "Hope and dreams."

"Will those bake bread and feed babes?" said the vine, as he shook his wrinkled tendrils despondently in the March air.

We did not ask in the attic.

Summer was nigh at hand, and we loved one another.

René had come to us—we had not gone to him. For our garret was on the sunny, his on the dark, side of the street, and Lili feared the gloom for me and the bird; and she could not bring herself to leave that old red-leaved creeper who had wound himself so close about the rain-pipe and the roof, and who could not have been dislodged without being slain.

With the Mardi Gras her trade had returned to her. René, unable to prosecute his grand works, took many of the little boxes in his own hands, and wrought on them with all the nameless mystical charm and the exquisite grace of touch which belong to the man who is by nature a great artist. The little trade could not at its best price bring much, but it brought bread; and we were happy.

While he worked at the box-lids she had leisure for her household labors: when these were done she would draw out her mother's old Breton distaff, and would sit and spin. When twilight fell they would go forth together to dream under the dewy avenues and the glistening stars, or as often would wait whilst he played on his mountain flute to the people at the doorways in the street below.

"Is it better to go out and see the stars and the leaves ourselves, or to

stay in-doors and make all these forget the misfortune of not seeing them?" said Lili on one of those evenings when the warmth and the sunset almost allured her to draw the flute from her husband's hands and give him his hat instead; and then she looked down into the narrow road, at the opposite houses, at the sewing-girls stitching by their little windows, at the pale students studying their sickly lore with scalpel and with skeleton, at the hot, dusty little children at play on the asphalt sidewalk, at the sorrowful, darkened casements behind which she knew beds of sickness or of paralyzed old age were hidden—looked at all this from behind my blossoms, and then gave up the open air and the evening stroll that were so dear a pastime to her, and whispered to René, "Play, or they will be disappointed."

And he played, instead of going to the debating-club in the room round the corner.

"He has ceased to be a patriot," grumbled the old vine. "It is always so with every man when once he has loved a woman!"

Myself, I could not see that there was less patriotism in breathing the poetry of sound into the ears of his neighbors than, in rousing the passions of hell in the breasts of his brethren.

But perhaps this was my ignorance: I believe that of late years people have grown to hold that the only pure patriotism is, and ought to be, evinced in the most intense and the most brutalized form of one passion—"Envy, eldest born of hell."

So these two did some good, and were happy, though more than once it chanced to them to have to go a whole day without tasting food of any sort.

I have said that René had genius—a genius bold, true, impassioned, masterful—such a genius as colors the smallest trifles that it touches. René could no more help putting an ideal grace into those little sweetmeat boxes—which sold at their very highest, in the booths of the fairs, at fifty centimes apiece—than we, the roses, can help being fragrant and fair.

Genius has a way of casting its pearls in the dust as we scatter our fragrance to every breeze that blows. Now and then the pearl is caught and treasured, as now and then some solitary creature pauses to smell the sweetness of the air in which we grow, and thanks the God who made us.

But as ninety-nine roses bloom unthanked for one that is thus remembered, so ninety-nine of the pearls of genius are trodden to pieces for one that is set on high and crowned with honor.

In the twilight of a dull day a little, feeble, brown old man climbed the staircase and entered our attic with shambling step.

We had no strangers to visit us: who visits the poor? We thought he was an enemy: the poor always do think so, being so little used to strangers.

René drew himself erect, and strove to hide the poverty of his garments, standing by his easel. Lili came to me and played with my leaves in her tender, caressing fashion.

"You painted this, M. René Claude?" asked the little brown old man. He held in his hand one of the bonbon boxes, the prettiest of them all, with a tambourine-girl dancing in a wreath of Provence roses. René had copied me with loving fidelity in the flowers, and with a sigh had murmured as he cast the box aside when finished, "That ought to fetch at least a franc!" But he had got no more than the usual two sous for it.

The little man sat down on the chair which Lili placed for him.

"So they told me where I bought this. It was at a booth at St. Cloud. Do you know that it is charming?"

René smiled a little sadly: Lili flushed with joy. It was the first praise which she had ever heard given to him.

"You have a great talent," pursued the little man.

René bowed his handsome haggard face—his mouth quivered a very little: for the first time Hope entered into him.

"Genius, indeed," said the stranger; and he sauntered a little about and looked at the canvases, and wondered and

praised, and said not very much, but said that little so well and so judiciously that it was easy to see he was no mean judge of art, and possibly no slender patron of it.

As Lili stood by me I saw her color come and go and her breast heave. I too trembled in all my leaves: were recognition and the world's homage coming to René at last?

"And I have been so afraid always that I had injured, burdened him, clogged his strength in that endless strife!" she murmured below her breath. "O dear little rose! if only the world can but know his greatness!"

Meanwhile the old man looked through the sketches and studies with which the room was strewn. "You do not finish your things?" he said abruptly.

René flushed darkly. "Oil pictures cost money," he said, briefly, "and—I am very poor."

Though a peasant's son, he was very proud: the utterance must have cost him much.

The stranger took snuff. "You are a man of singular genius," he said simply. "You only want to be known to get the prices of Meissonier."

Meissonier!—the Rothschild of the studios, the artist whose six-inch canvas would bring the gold value of a Raphael or a Titian!

Lili, breathing fast and white as death with ecstasy, made the sign of the cross on her breast: the delicate brown hand of René shook where it leaned on his easel.

They were both silent—silent from the intensity of their hope.

"Do you know who I am?" the old man pursued with a cordial smile.

"I have not that honor," murmured René.

The stranger, taking his snuff out of a gold box, named a name at which the painter started. It was that of one of the greatest art-dealers in the whole of Europe; one who at a word could make or mar an artist's reputation; one whose accuracy of judgment was considered infallible by all connoisseurs, and the passport to whose galleries was to any

unknown painting a certain passport also to the fame of men.

"You are a man of singular genius," repeated the great purchaser, taking his snuff in the middle of the little bare chamber. "It is curious—one always finds genius either in a cellar or in an attic: it never, by any chance, is to be discovered midway on the stairs—never in the *mezzo terzo*! But to the point. You have great delicacy of touch, striking originality, a wonderful purity yet bloom in your color, and an exquisite finish of minutæ, without any weakness—a combination rare, very rare. That girl yonder, feeding white pigeons on the leads of a roof, with an atom of blue sky, and a few vine leaves straying over the parapet—that is perfectly conceived. Finished it must be. So must that little study of the beggar-boy looking through the gilded gates into the rose-gardens—it is charming, charming. Your price for those?"

René's colorless, worn young face colored to the brows. "Monsieur is too good," he muttered brokenly. "A nameless artist has no price, except—"

"Honor," murmured Lili as she moved forward with throbbing heart and dim eyes. "Ah, monsieur, give him a name in Paris! We want nothing else—nothing else!"

"Poor fools!" said the dealer to his snuff-box. I heard him—they did not.

"Madame," he answered aloud, "Paris herself will give him that the first day his first canvas hangs in my galleries. Meanwhile, I must in honesty be permitted to add something more. For each of those little canvases, the girl on the roof and the boy at the gate, I will give you now two thousand francs, and two thousand more when they shall be completed. Provided—"

He paused and glanced musingly at René.

Lili had turned away, and was sobbing for very joy at this undreamed-of deliverance.

René stood quite still, with his hands crossed on the easel and his head bent on his chest. The room, I think, swam round him.

The old man sauntered again a little about the place, looking here and looking there, murmuring certain artistic disquisitions technical and scientific, leaving them time to recover from the intensity of their emotion.

What a noble thing old age was, I thought, living only to give hope to the young in their sorrow, and to release captive talents from the prison of obscurity! We should leave the little room in the roof, and dwell in some bright quarter where it was all leaves and flowers; and René would be great, and go to dine with princes and drive a team of belled horses, like a famous painter who had dashed once with his splendid equipage through our narrow passage; and we should see the sky always—as much of it as ever we chose; and Lili would have a garden of her own, all grass and foliage and falling waters, in which I should live in the open air all the day long, and make believe that I was in Provence.

My dreams and my fancies were broken by the sound of the old man's voice taking up the thread of his discourse once more in front of René.

"I will give you four thousand francs each for those two little canvases," he repeated. "It is a mere pinch of dust to what you will make in six months' time if—if—you hear me?—your name is brought before the public of Paris in my galleries and under my auspices. I suppose you have heard something of what I can do, eh? Well, all I can do I will do for you; for you have a great talent, and without introduction, my friend, you may as well roll up your pictures and burn them in your stove to save charcoal. You know that?"

René indeed knew—none better. Lili turned on the old man her sweet, frank Breton eyes, smiling their radiant gratitude through tenderest tears.

"The saints will reward you, monsieur, in a better world than this," she murmured softly.

The old man took snuff a little nervously. "There is one condition I must make," he said with a trifling hesitation—"one only."

"Ask of my gratitude what you will," answered René quickly, while he drew a deep breath of relief and freedom—the breath of one who casts to the ground the weight of a deadly burden.

"It is, that you will bind yourself only to paint for me."

"Certainly!" René gave the assent with eagerness. Poor fellow! it was a novelty so exquisite to have any one save the rats to paint for. It never dawned upon his thoughts that when he stretched his hands out with such passionate desire to touch the hem of the garment of Fortune and catch the gleam of the laurels of Fame, he might be in truth only holding them out to fresh fetters.

"Very well," said the old man quietly, and he sat down again and looked full in René's face, and unfolded his views for the artist's future.

He used many words, and was slow and suave in their utterance, and paused often and long to take out his heavy gold box; but he spoke well. Little by little his meaning gleamed out from the folds of verbiage in which he skillfully enwrapped it.

It was this.

The little valueless drawings on the people's sweetmeat boxes of gilded cardboard had a grace, a color and a beauty in them which had caught, at a fair-booth in the village of St. Cloud, the ever-watchful eyes of the great dealer. He had bought half a dozen of the boxes for a couple of francs. He had said, "Here is what I want." Wanted for what? Briefly, to produce Petitot enamels and Fragonard cabinets—genuine eighteenth-century work. There was a rage for it. René would understand?

René's dark, southern eyes lost a little of their new lustre of happiness, and grew troubled with a sort of cloud of perplexity. He did not seem to understand.

The old man took more snuff, and used phrases clearer still.

There were great collectors—dilettanti of houses imperial and royal and princely and noble, of all the grades of greatness—who would give any sum for bonbonnières and tabatières of eighteenth-

century work by any one of the few famous masters of that time. A genuine, incontestable sweetmeat box from the ateliers of the Louis XIV. or Louis XV. period would fetch almost a fabulous sum. Then again he paused, doubtfully.

René bowed, and his wondering glance said without words, "I know this. But I have no eighteenth-century work to sell you: if I had, should we starve in an attic?"

His patron coughed a little, looked at Lili, then proceeded to explain yet farther.

In René's talent he had discerned the hues, the grace, the delicacy yet brilliancy, the voluptuousness and the *désinvolture* of the best eighteenth-century work. René doubtless did other and higher things which pleased himself far more than these airy trifles. Well, let him pursue the greater line of art if he chose; but he, the old man who spoke, could assure him that nothing would be so lucrative to him as those bacchantes in wreaths of roses and young tambourine-players *gorge au vent* dancing in a bed of violets, and beautiful marquises, powdered and jeweled, looking over their fans, which he had painted for those poor little two-sous boxes of the populace, and the like of which, exquisitely finished on enamel or ivory, set in gold and tortoise-shell rimmed with pearls and turquoises or opals and diamonds, would deceive the finest connoisseur in Europe into receiving them as—whatever they might be signed and dated.

If René would do one or two of these at dictation in a year, not more—more would be perilous—paint and sign them and produce them with any touches that might be commanded; never ask what became of them when finished, nor recognize them if hereafter he might see them in any illustrious collection,—if René would bind himself to do this, he, the old man who spoke, would buy his other paintings, place them well in his famous galleries, and, using all his influence, would make him in a twelve-month's time the most celebrated of all the young painters of Paris.

It was a bargain? Ah, how well it was, he said, to put the best of one's powers into the most trifling things one did! If that poor little two-sous box had been less lavishly and gracefully decorated, it would never have arrested his eyes in the bonbon-booth at St. Cloud. The old man paused to take snuff and receive an answer.

René stood motionless.

Lili had sunk into a seat, and was gazing at the tempter with wide-open, puzzled, startled eyes. Both were silent.

"It is a bargain?" said the old man again. "Understand me, M. René Claude. You have no risk, absolutely none, and you have the certainty of fair fame and fine fortune in the space of a few years. You will be a great man before you have a gray hair: that comes to very few. I shall not trouble you for more than two dix-huitième siècle enamels in the year—perhaps for only one. You can spend ten months out of the twelve on your own canvases, making your own name and your own wealth as swiftly as your ambition and impatience can desire. Madame here," said the acute dealer with a pleasant smile—"Madame here can have a garden sloping on the Seine and a glass house of choicest flowers—which I see are her graceful weakness—ere another rose-season has time to come round, if you choose."

His voice lingered softly on the three last words.

The dew stood on René's forehead, his hands clenched on the easel:

"You wish me—to—paint—forgeries of the Petitot enamels?"

The old man smiled unmoved: "Chut, chut! Will you paint me little bonbonnières on enamel instead of on cardboard? That is all the question. I have said where they go, how they are set: what they are called shall be my affair. You know nothing. The only works of yours which you will be concerned to acknowledge will be your own canvas pictures. What harm can it do any creature? You will gratify a connoisseur or two innocently, and you will meanwhile be at leisure to follow

the bent of your own genius, which otherwise—"

He paused: I heard the loud throbs of René's heart under that cruel temptation.

Lili gazed at his tempter with the same startled terror and bewilderment still dilating her candid eyes with a woeful pain.

"Otherwise," pursued the old man with merciless tranquillity, "you will never see me any more, my friends. If you try to repeat any story to my hindrance, no one will credit you. I am rich, you are poor. You have a great talent: I shall regret to see it lost, but I shall let it die—so."

And he trod very gently on a little gnat that crawled near his foot, and killed it.

A terrible agony gathered in the artist's face.

"O God!" he cried in his torture, and his eyes went to the canvases against the wall, and then to the face of his wife, with an unutterable yearning desire.

For them, for *them*, this sin which tempted him looked virtue.

"Do you hesitate?" said the merciless old man. "Pshaw! whom do you hurt? You give me work as good as that which you imitate, and I call it only by a dead man's name: who is injured? What harm can there be in humoring the fanaticism of fashion? Choose—I am in haste."

René hid his face with his hands, so that he should not behold those dear creations of his genius which so cruelly, so innocently, assailed him with a temptation beyond his strength.

"Choose for me—you!" he muttered in his agony to Lili.

Lili, white as death, drew closer to him.

"My René, your heart has chosen," she murmured through her dry, quivering lips. "You cannot buy honor by fraud."

René lifted his head and looked straight in the eyes of the man who held the scales of his fate, and could weigh out for his whole life's portion either fame and fortune or obscurity and famine.

"Sir," he said slowly, with a bitter tranquil smile about his mouth, "my garret is empty, but it is clean. May I trouble you to leave it as you found it?"

So they were strong to the end, these two famished children of frivolous Paris.

But when the door had closed and shut their tempter out, the revulsion came: they wept those tears of blood which come from the hearts' depths of those who have seen Hope mock them with a smile a moment, to leave them face to face with Death.

"Poor fools!" sighed the old vine from his corner in the gray, dull twilight of the late autumn day.

Was the vine right?

The air which he had breathed for fifty years through all his dust-choked leaves and tendrils had been the air off millions of human lungs, corrupted in its passage through millions of human lips, and the thoughts which he thought were those of human wisdom.

The sad day died; the night fell; the lattice was closed; the flute lay untouched. A great misery seemed to enfold us. True, we were no worse off than we had been when the same day dawned. But that is the especial cruelty of every tempter always: he touches the innocent closed eyes of his victims with a collyrium which makes the happy blindness of content no longer possible. If strong to resist him, he has still his vengeance, for they are never again at peace as they were before that fatal hour in which he showed them all that they were not, all that they might be.

Our stove was not more chill, our garret not more empty; our darkness not more dark amidst the gay, glad, dazzling city; our dusky roof and looming crown that shut the sky out from us not more gloomy and impenetrable than they had been on all those other earlier nights when yet we had been happy. Yet how intensified million-fold seemed cold and loneliness and poverty and darkness, all!—for we had for the first time known what it was to think of riches, of fame, of homage, of light, as *possible*, and then to lose them all for ever!

I had been resigned for love's sake to dwell amongst the roofs, seeing not the faces of the stars, nor feeling ever the full glory of the sun; but now— I had dreamed of the fair freedom of gardenways and the endless light of summer suns on palace terraces, and I drooped and shivered and sickened, and was twice captive and twice exiled; and knew that I was a little nameless, worthless, hapless thing, whose fairest chaplet of blossom no hand would ever gather for a crown.

As with my life, so was it likewise with theirs.

They had been so poor, but they had been so happy: the poverty remained, the joy had flown.

That winter was again very hard, very cold: they suffered greatly.

They could scarcely keep together body and soul, as your strange phrase runs: they went without food sometimes for days and days, and fuel they had scarcely ever.

The bird in his cage was sold: they would not keep the little golden singing thing to starve to silence like themselves.

As for me, I nearly perished of the cold: only the love I bore to Lili kept a little life in my leafless branches.

All that cruel winter-time they were strong still, those children of Paris.

For they sought no alms, and in their uttermost extremity neither of them ever whispered to the other, "Go seek the tempter: repent, be wise. Give not up our lives for a mere phantasy of honor."

"When the snow is on the ground, and the canvases have to burn in the stove, then you will change your minds and come to me on your knees," the old wicked, foul spirit had said, mocking them, as he had opened the door of the attic and passed away creaking down the dark stairs.

And I suppose he had reckoned on this; but if he had done so he had reckoned without his host, as your phrase runs: neither René nor Lili ever went to him, either on knees or in any other wise.

When the spring came we three were still all living—at least their hearts still

beat and their lips still drew breath, as my boughs were still green and my roots still clung to the soil. But no more to them or to me did the coming of spring bring, as of old, the real living of life, which is joy. And my lover the wind wooed me no more, and the birds no more brought me the rose-whispers of my kindred in Provence. For even the little pigeon-hole in the roof had become too costly a home for us, and we dwelt in a den under the stones of the streets, where no light came and scarce a breath of air ever strayed to us.

There the uncompleted canvases on which the painter whom Lili loved had tried to write his title to the immortality of fame, were at last finished—finished, for the rats ate them.

All this while we lived—the man whose genius and misery were hell on earth; the woman whose very purity and perfectness of love were her direst torture; and I, the little white flower born of the sun and the dew, of fragrance and freedom, to whom every moment of this blindness, this suffocation, this starvation, this stench of putrid odors, this horrible roar of the street above, was a moment worse than any pang of death.

Away there in Provence so many a fair rose-sister of mine bowed her glad, proud, innocent head with anguish and shuddering terrors to the sharp summons of the severing knife that cut in twain her life, whilst I—I, on and on—was forced to keep so much of life as lies in the capacity to suffer and to love in vain.

So much was left to them: no more.

"Let us compel Death to remember us, since even Death forgets us!" René murmured once in his despair to her.

But Lili had pressed her famished lips to his: "Nay, dear, wait: God will remember us even yet, I think."

It was her faith. And of her faith she was justified at last.

There came a ghastlier season yet, a time of horror insupportable—of ceaseless sound beside which the roar of the mere traffic of the streets would have seemed silence—a stench beside which

the sulphur smoke and the gas fumes of a previous time would have been as some sweet fresh woodland air—a famine beside which the daily hunger of the poor was remembered as the abundance of a feast—a cold beside which the chillness of the scant fuel and empty braziers of other winters were recalled as the warmth of summer—a darkness only lit by the red flame of burning houses—a solitude only broken by the companionship of woe and sickness and despair—a suffocation only changed by a rush of air strong with the scent of blood, of putridity, of the million living plague-stricken, of the million dead lying unburied.

For there was War.

Of year or day or hour I knew nothing. It was always the same blackness as of night; the same horror of sound, of scent, of cold; the same misery; the same torture. I suppose that the sun was quenched, that the birds were dumb, that the winds were stilled for ever—that all the world was dead: I do not know. They called it War. I suppose that they meant—Hell!

Yet Lili lived, and I: in that dead darkness we had lost René—we saw his face no more. Yet he could not be in his grave, I knew, for Lili, clasping my barren branches to her breast, would murmur, "Whilst he still lives I will live—yes, yes, yes!"

And she did live—so long, so long!—on a few draughts of water and a few husks of grain.

I knew that it was long, for full a hundred times she muttered aloud, "Another day? O God!—how long? how long?"

At last in the darkness a human hand was stretched to her, once, close beside me. A foul, fierce light, the light of flame, was somewhere on the air above us, and at that moment glowed through the horrid gloom we dwelt in in the bowels of the earth. I saw the hand and what it held to her: it was a stranger's, and it held the little colorless dead rose, my sweetest blossom, that had lain ever upon René's heart.

She took it—she who had given it as

her first love-gift. She was mute. In the glare of the flame that quivered through the darkness I saw her—standing quite erect and very still.

The voice of a stranger thrilled through the din from the world above. "He fought as only patriots can," it said softly and as through tears. "I was beside him. He fell with Regnault in the sortie yesterday. He could not speak: he had only strength to give me this for you. Be comforted: he has died for Paris."

On Lili's face there came once more the radiance of a perfect peace, a glory pure and endless as the glory of the sun. "Great in death!" she murmured. "My love, my love, I come!"

I lost her in the darkness.

I heard a voice above me say that life had left her lips as the dead rose touched them.

What more is there for me to tell?

I live, since to breathe, and to feel pain, and to desire vainly, and to suffer always, are surest proofs of life.

I live, since that stranger's hand which brought my little dead blossom as the message of farewell, had pity on me and brought me away from that living grave. But the pity was vain: I died the only death that had any power to hurt me when the human heart I loved grew still for ever.

The light of the full day now shines on me; the shadows are cool, the dews are welcome: they speak around me of the coming of spring, and in the silence of the dawns I hear from the woods without the piping of the nesting birds; but for me the summer can never more return—for me the sun can never again be shining—for me the greenest garden world is barren as a desert.

For I am only a little rose, but I am in exile and France is desolate.



A LEAF IN THE STORM.

THE Berceau de Dieu was a little village in the valley of the Seine. As a lark drops its nest amongst the grasses, so a few peasant people had dropped their little farms and cottages amidst the great green woods on the winding river. It was a pretty place, with one steep, stony street, shady with poplars and with elms; quaint houses, about whose thatch a cloud of white and gray pigeons fluttered all day long; a little aged chapel with a conical red roof; and great barns covered with ivy and thick creepers, red and purple, and lichens that were yellow in the sun. All around it there were the broad, flowering meadows, with the sleek cattle of Normandy fattening in them, and the sweet dim forests where the young men and maidens went on every holy day and feast-day in the summer-time to seek for wood-anemones, and lilies of the pools, and the wild campanula, and the fresh dog-rose, and all the boughs and grasses that made their house doors like garden bowers, and seemed to take the cushat's note and the linnet's song into their little temple of God.

The Berceau de Dieu was very old indeed. Men said that the hamlet had been there in the day of the Virgin of Orléans; and a stone cross of the twelfth century still stood by the great pond of water at the bottom of the street under the chestnut tree, where the villagers gathered to gossip at sunset when their work was done. It had no city near it, and no town nearer than four leagues. It was in the green care of a pastoral district, thickly wooded and intersected with orchards. Its produce of wheat, and oats, and cheese, and fruit, and eggs was more than sufficient for its simple prosperity. Its people were hardy, kindly, laborious, happy; living round the little gray chapel in amity and good-fellowship. Nothing troubled it. War and rumors of war, revolutions and

counter-revolutions, empires and insurrections, military and political questions,—these all were for it things unknown and unheard of—mighty winds that arose and blew and swept the lands around it, but never came near enough to harm it, lying there, as it did, in its loneliness like any lark's nest. Even in the great days of the Revolution it had been quiet. It had had a lord whom it loved in the old castle on the hill at whose feet it nestled: it had never tried to harm him, and it had wept bitterly when he had fallen at Jemappes, and left no heir, and the château had crumbled into ivy-hung ruins. The thunder-heats of that dread time had scarcely scorched it. It had seen a few of its best youth march away to the chant of the Marseillaise to fight on the plains of Champagne; and it had been visited by some patriots in *bonnets rouges* and soldiers in blue uniforms, who had given it tricolored cockades and bade it wear them in the holy name of the Republic one and indivisible. But it had not known what these meant, and its harvests had been reaped without the sound of a shot in its fields or any gleam of steel by its innocent hearths; so that the terrors and the tidings of those noble and ghastly years had left no impress on its generations.

Reine Allix indeed, the oldest woman amongst them all, numbering more than ninety years, remembered when she was a child hearing her father and his neighbors talk in low, awestricken tones one bitter wintry night of how a king had been slain to save the people; and she remembered likewise—remembered it well, because it had been her betrothal-night and the sixteenth birthday of her life—how a horseman had flashed through the startled street like a comet, and had called aloud in a voice of fire, "Gloire! gloire! gloire!—Marengo! Marengo! Marengo!" and how the

village had dimly understood that something marvelous for France had happened afar off, and how her brothers and her cousins and her betrothed, and she with them, had all gone up to the high slope over the river, and had piled up a great pyramid of pine wood and straw and dried mosses, and had set flame to it, till it had glowed in its scarlet triumph all through that wondrous night of the sultry summer of victory.

These and the like memories she would sometimes relate to the children at evening when they gathered round her begging for a story. Otherwise, no memories of the Revolution or the Empire disturbed the tranquillity of the Berceau; and even she, after she had told them, would add: "I am not sure now what Marengo was. A battle, no doubt, but I am not sure where nor why. But we heard later that little Claudis, my aunt's youngest born, a volunteer not nineteen, died at it. If we had known, we should not have gone up and lit the bonfire."

This woman, who had been born in that time of famine and flame, was the happiest creature in the whole hamlet of the Berceau. "I am old: yes, I am very old," she would say, looking up from her spinning-wheel in her house door, and shading her eyes from the sun, "very old—ninety-two last summer. But when one has a roof over one's head, and a pot of soup always, and a grandson like mine, and when one has lived all one's life in the Berceau de Dieu, then it is well to be so old. Ah yes, my little ones—yes, though you doubt it, you little birds that have just tried your wings—it is well to be so old. One has time to think, and thank the good God, which one never seemed to have a minute to do in that work, work, work when one was young."

Reine Allix was a tall and strong woman, very withered, and very bent, and very brown, yet with sweet, dark, flashing eyes that had still light in them, and a face that was still noble, though nearly a century had bronzed it with its harvest suns and blown on it with its winter winds. She wore always the same garb

of homely dark-blue serge, always the same tall white headgear, always the same pure silver ear-rings that had been at once an heirloom and a nuptial gift. She was always shod in her wooden sabots, and she always walked abroad with a staff of ash. She had been born in the Berceau de Dieu; had lived there and wedded there; had toiled there all her life, and never left it for a greater distance than a league or a longer time than a day. She loved it with an intense love: the world beyond it was nothing to her: she scarcely believed in it as existing. She could neither read nor write. She told the truth, reared her offspring in honesty, and praised God always—had praised Him when starving in a bitter winter after her husband's death, when there had been no field-work, and she had had five children to feed and clothe; and praised Him now that her sons were all dead before her, and all she had living of her blood was her grandson Bernadou.

Her life had been a hard one. Her parents had been hideously poor. Her marriage had scarcely bettered her condition. She had labored in the fields always, hoeing and weeding and reaping and carrying wood and driving mules, and continually rising with the first streak of the daybreak. She had known fever and famine and all manner of earthly ills. But now in her old age she had peace. Two of her dead sons, who had sought their fortunes in the other hemisphere, had left her a little money, and she had a little cottage and a plot of ground, and a pig, and a small orchard. She was well-to-do, and could leave it all to Bernadou; and for ten years she had been happy, perfectly happy, in the coolness and the sweetness and the old familiar ways and habits of the Berceau.

Bernadou was very good to her. The lad, as she called him, was five-and-twenty years old, tall and straight and clean-limbed, with the blue eyes of the North, and a gentle, frank face. He worked early and late in the plot of ground that gave him his livelihood. He lived with his grandmother, and

tended her with a gracious courtesy and veneration that never altered. He was not very wise; he also could neither read nor write; he believed in his priest and his homestead, and loved the ground that he had trodden ever since his first steps from the cradle had been guided by Reine Allix. He had never been drawn for the conscription, because he was the only support of a woman of ninety: he likewise had never been half a dozen kilomètres from his birth-place. When he was bidden to vote, and he asked what his vote of assent would pledge him to, they told him, "It will bind you to honor your grandmother so long as she shall live, and to get up with the lark, and to go to mass every Sunday, and to be a loyal son to your country. Nothing more." And thereat he had smiled and straightened his stalwart frame, and gone right willingly to the voting-urn.

He was very stupid in these things; and Reine Allix, though clear-headed and shrewd, was hardly more learned in them than he.

"Look you," she had said to him oftentimes, "in my babyhood there was the old white flag upon the château. Well, they pulled that down and put up a red one. That toppled and fell, and there was one of three colors. Then somebody with a knot of white lilies in his hand came one day and set up the old white one afresh; and before the day was done that was down again and the tricolor again up where it is. Now, some I know fretted themselves greatly because of all these changes of the flags, but as for me, I could not see that any one of them mattered: bread was just as dear and sleep was just as sweet whichever of the three was uppermost."

Bernadou, who had never known but the flag of three colors, believed her, as indeed he believed every word that those kindly and resolute old lips ever uttered to him.

He had never been in a city, and only once, on the day of his first communion, in the town four leagues away. He knew nothing more than this simple, cleanly, honest life that he led.

With what men did outside his little world of meadow-land and woodland he had no care nor any concern. Once a man had come through the village of the Berceau, a traveling hawker of cheap prints—a man with a wild eye and a restless brain—who told Bernadou that he was a downtrodden slave, a clod, a beast like a mule, who fetched and carried that the rich might fatten—a dolt, an idiot, who cared nothing for the rights of man and the wrongs of the poor. Bernadou had listened with a perplexed face: then with a smile, that had cleared it like sunlight, he had answered in his country dialect, "I do not know of what you speak. Rights? Wrongs? I cannot tell. But I have never owed a sou; I have never told a lie; I am strong enough to hold my own with any man that flouts me; and I am content where I am. That is enough for me."

The peddler had called him a poor-spirited beast of burden, but had said so out of reach of his arm, and by night had slunk away from the Berceau de Dieu, and had been no more seen there to vex the quiet contentment of its peaceful and peace-loving ways.

At night, indeed, sometimes, the little wineshop of the village would be frequented by some half dozen of the peasant proprietors of the place, who talked Communism after their manner, not a very clear one, in excited tones and with the feverish glances of conspirators. But it meant little, and came to less. The weather and the price of wheat were dearer matters to them; and in the end they usually drank their red wine in amity, and went up the village street arm in arm, singing patriotic songs until their angry wives flung open their lattices and thrust their white headgear out into the moonlight, and called to them shrewishly to get to bed and not make fools of themselves in that fashion; which usually silenced and sobered them all instantly; so that the revolutions of the Berceau de Dieu, if not quenched in a winepot, were always smothered in a nightcap, and never by any chance disturbed its repose.

But of these noisy patriots, Bernadou was never one. He had the instinctive conservatism of the French peasant, which is in such direct and tough antagonism with the feverish Socialism of the French artisan. His love was for the soil—a love deep-rooted as the oaks that grew in it. Of Paris he had a dim, vague dread, as of a superb beast continually draining and devouring. Of all forms of government he was alike ignorant. So long as he tilled his little angle of land in peace, so long as the sun ripened his fruits and corn, so long as famine was away from his door and his neighbors dwelt in good-fellowship with him, so long he was happy, and cared not whether he was thus happy under a monarchy, an empire or a republic. This wisdom, which the peddler called apathy and cursed, the young man had imbibed from Nature and the teachings of Reine Allix. "Look at home and mind thy work," she had said always to him. "It is labor enough for a man to keep his own life clean and his own hands honest. Be not thou at any time as they are who are for ever telling the good God how He might have made the world on a better plan, while the rats gnaw at their haystacks and the children cry over an empty platter."

And he had taken heed to her words; so that in all the countryside there was not any lad truer, gentler, braver or more patient at labor than was Bernadou; and though some thought him mild even to foolishness, and meek even to stupidity, he was no fool; and he had a certain rough skill at music, and a rare gift at the culture of plants, that made his little home bright within in the winter-time with melody, and in the summer gay without as a king's parterre.

At any rate, Reine Allix and he had been happy together for a quarter of a century under the old gray thatch of the wayside cottage, where it stood at the foot of the village street, with its great sycamores spread above it. Nor were they less happy when in mid-April, in the six-and-twentieth year of his age,

Bernadou had come in with a bunch of primroses in his hand, and had bent down to her and saluted her with a respectful tenderness, and said softly and a little shyly, "Gran'mère, would it suit you if I were ever—to marry?"

Reine Allix was silent a minute and more, cherishing the primroses and placing them in a little brown cupful of water. Then she looked at him steadily with her clear, dark eyes: "Who is it, my child?" He was always a child to her, this last-born of the numerous brood that had once dwelt with her under the spreading branches of the sycamores, and had now all perished off the face of the earth, leaving himself and her alone.

Bernadou's eyes met hers frankly: "It is Margot Dal: does that please you, gran'mère, or no?"

"It pleases me well," she said simply. But there was a little quiver about her firm-set mouth, and her aged head was bent over the primroses. She had foreseen it; she was glad of it; and yet for the instant it was a pang to her.

"I am very thankful," said Bernadou, with a flash of joy on his face. He was independent of his grandmother: he could make enough to marry upon by his daily toil, and he had a little store of gold and silver in his bank in the thatch, put by for a rainy day; but he would have no more thought of going against her will than he would have thought of lifting his hand against her. In the primitive homesteads of the Berceau de Dieu filial reverence was still accounted the first of virtues, yet the simplest and the most imperative.

"I will go see Margot this evening," said Reine Allix after a little pause. "She is a good girl, and a brave, and of pure heart and fair name. You have chosen well, my grandson."

Bernadou stooped his tall, fair, curly head, and she laid her hands on him and blessed him.

That evening, as the sun set, Reine Allix kept her word, and went to the young maiden who had allured the eyes and heart of Bernadou. Margot was an orphan: she had not a penny to her

dower; she had been brought up on charity, and she dwelt now in the family of the largest landowner of the place, a miller with a numerous offspring, and several head of cattle, and many stretches of pasture and of orchard. Margot worked for a hard master, living indeed as one of the family, but sharply driven all day long at all manner of house-work and field-work. Reine Allix had kept her glance on her, through some instinctive sense of the way that Bernadou's thoughts were turning, and she had seen much to praise, nothing to chide, in the young girl's modest, industrious, cheerful, uncomplaining life. Margot was very pretty too, with the brown oval face, and the great black, soft eyes, and the beautiful form of the southern blood that had run in the veins of her father, who had been a sailor of Marseilles, whilst her mother had been a native of the Provençal country. Altogether, Reine Allix knew that her beloved one could not have done better or more wisely, if choose at all he must. Some people indeed, she said to herself as she climbed the street whose sharp-set flints had been trodden by her wooden shoes for ninety years—"Some people would mourn and scold because there is no store of linen, no piece of silver plate, no little round sum in money with the poor child. But what does it matter? We have enough for three. It is wicked indeed for parents to live so that they leave their daughter portionless, but it is no fault of the child's. Let them say what they like, it is a reason the more that she should want a roof over her head and a husband to care for her good."

So she climbed the steep way and the slanting road round the hill, and went in by the door of the mill-house, and found Margot busy in washing some spring lettuces and other green things in a bowl of bright water. Reine Allix, in the fashion of her country and her breeding, was about to confer with the master and mistress ere saying a word to the girl, but there was that in Margot's face and in her timid greeting that lured speech out of her. She looked

long and keenly into the child's downcast countenance, then touched her with a tender smile: "Petite Margot, the birds told me a little secret to-day. Canst guess what it is? Say?"

Margot colored and then grew pale. True, Bernadou had never really spoken to her, but still, when one is seventeen, and has danced a few times with the same person, and has plucked the leaves of a daisy away to learn one's fortune, spoken words are not very much wanted.

At sight of her the eyes of the old woman moistened and grew dimmer than age had made them: she smiled still, but the smile had the sweetness of a blessing in it, and no longer the kindly banter of humor. "You love him, my little one?" she said in a soft, hushed voice.

"Ah, madame—!" Margot could not say more. She covered her face with her hands, and turned to the wall, and wept with a passion of joy.

Down in the Berceau there were gossips who would have said, with wise shakes of their heads, "Tut, tut! how easy it is to make believe in a little love when one is a serving-maid, and has not a sou, nor a roof, nor a friend in the world, and a comely youth well-to-do is willing to marry us!"

But Reine Allix knew better. She had not lived ninety years in the world not to be able to discern between true feeling and counterfeit. She was touched, and drew the trembling frame of Margot into her arms, and kissed her twice on the closed, blue-veined lids of her black eyes. "Make him happy, only make him happy," she murmured; "for I am very old, Margot, and he is alone, all alone."

And the child crept to her, sobbing for very rapture that she, friendless, homeless and penniless, should be thus elected for so fair a fate, and whispered through her tears, "I will."

Reine Allix spoke in all form to the miller and his wife, and with as much earnestness in her demand as though she had been seeking the hand of rich Yacobé, the tavern-keeper's only daughter. The people assented: they had no

pretext to oppose, and Reine Allix wrapped her cloak about her and descended the hill and the street just as the twilight closed in and the little lights began to glimmer through the lattices and the shutters and the green mantle of the boughs, whilst the red fires of the smithy forge glowed brightly in the gloom, and a white horse waited to be shod, a boy in a blue blouse seated on its back and switching away with a branch of budding hazel the first gray gnats of the early year.

"It is well done, it is well done," she said to herself, looking at the low rosy clouds and the pale gold of the waning sky. "A year or two, and I shall be in my grave. I shall leave him easier if I know he has some creature to care for him, and I shall be quiet in my coffin, knowing that his children's children will live on and on and on in the Berceau, and sometimes perhaps think a little of me when the nights are long and they sit round the fire."

She went in out of the dewy air, into the little low, square room of her cottage, and went up to Bernadou and laid her hands on his shoulders.

"Be it well with thee, my grandson, and with thy sons' sons after thee," she said solemnly. "Margot will be thy wife. May thy days and hers be long in thy birth-place!"

A month later they were married. It was then May. The green nest of the Berceau seemed to overflow with the singing of birds and the blossoming of flowers. The cornlands promised a rare harvest, and the apple orchards were weighed down with their red and white blossoms. The little brown streams in the woods brimmed over in the grass, and the air was full of a sweet, mellow sunlight, a cool, fragrant breeze, a continual music of humming bees and soaring larks and mule-bells ringing on the roads, and childish laughter echoing from the fields.

In this glad spring-time Bernadou and Margot were wedded, going with their friends one sunny morning up the winding hill-path to the little gray chapel whose walls were hidden in ivy, and

whose sorrowful Christ looked down through the open porch across the blue and hazy width of the river. Georges the baker, whose fiddle made merry melody at all the village dances, played before them tunelessly; little children, with their hands full of wood-flowers, ran before them; his old blind poodle smelt its way faithfully by their footsteps; their priest led the way upward with the cross held erect against the light; Reine Allix walked beside them, nearly as firmly as she had trodden the same road seventy years before in her own bridal hour: in the hollow below lay the Berceau de Dieu, with its red gables and its thatched roofs hidden beneath leaves, and its peaceful pastures smiling under the serene blue skies of France.

They were happy—ah Heaven, so happy!—and all their little world rejoiced with them.

They came home, and their neighbors entered with them, and ate and drank, and gave them good wishes and gay songs; and the old priest blessed them with a father's tenderness upon their threshold; and the fiddle of Georges sent gladdest dance-music flying through the open casements, across the road, up the hill, far away to the clouds and the river.

At night, when the guests had departed and all was quite still within and without, Reine Allix sat alone at her window in the roof, thinking of their future and of her past, and watching the stars come out, one by another, above the woods. From her lattice in the eaves she saw straight up the village street; saw the dwellings of her lifelong neighbors, the slopes of the rich fields, the gleam of the broad gray water, the whiteness of the crucifix against the darkened skies. She saw it all—all so familiar, with that intimate association only possible to the peasant who has dwelt on one spot from birth to age. In that faint light, in those deep shadows, she could trace all the scene as though the brightness of the noon shone on it: it was all, in its homeliness and simplicity, intensely dear to her. In

the playtime of her childhood, in the courtship of her youth, in the joys and woes of her wifehood and widowhood, the bitter pains and sweet ecstasies of her maternity, the hunger and privation of struggling, desolate years, the contentment and serenity of old age,—in all these her eyes had rested only on this small, quaint leafy street, with its dwellings close and low, like beehives in a garden, and its pasture-lands and corn-lands, wood-girt and water-fed, stretching as far as the sight could reach. Every inch of its soil, every turn of its paths, was hallowed to her with innumerable memories: all her beloved dead were garnered there where the white Christ watched them: when her time should come, she thought, she would rest with them nothing loth. As she looked, the tears of thanksgiving rolled down her withered cheeks, and she bent her feeble limbs and knelt down in the moonlight, praising God that He had given her to live and die in this cherished home, and beseeching Him for her children that they likewise might dwell in honesty, and with length of days abide beneath that roof.

"God is good," she murmured as she stretched herself to sleep beneath the eaves—"God is good. Maybe, when He takes me to Himself, if I be worthy, He will tell His holy saints to give me a little corner in His kingdom, that He shall fashion for me in the likeness of the Berceau." For it seemed to her that, than the Berceau, heaven itself could hold no sweeter or fairer nook of Paradise.

The year rolled on, and the cottage under the sycamores was but the happier for its new inmate. Bernadou was serious of temper, though so gentle, and the arch, gay humor of his young wife was like perpetual sunlight in the house. Margot, too, was so docile, so eager, so bright, and so imbued with devotional reverence for her husband and his home, that Reine Allix day by day blessed the fate that had brought to her this fatherless and penniless child. Bernadou himself spoke little: words were not in his way, but his blue, frank eyes shone

with an unclouded radiance that never changed, and his voice, when he did speak, had a mellow softness in it that made his slightest speech to the two women with him tender as a caress.

"Thou art a happy woman, my sister," said the priest, who was wellnigh as old as herself.

Reine Allix bowed her head and made the sign of the cross: "I am, praise be to God!"

And being happy, she went to the hovel of poor Madelon Dreux, the cobbler's widow, and nursed her and her children through a malignant fever, sitting early and late, and leaving her own peaceful hearth for the desolate hut with the delirious ravings and heartrending moans of the fever-stricken. "How ought one to dare to be happy if one is not of use?" she would say to those who sought to dissuade her from running such peril.

Madelon Dreux and her family recovered, owing to her their lives, and she was happier than before, thinking of them when she sat on the settle before the wood-fire roasting chestnuts and spinning flax on the wheel, and ever and again watching the flame reflected on the fair head of Bernadou or in the dark, smiling eyes of Margot.

Another spring passed and another year went by, and the little home under the sycamores was still no less honest in its labors or bright in its rest. It was one amongst a million of such homes in France, where a sunny temper made mirth with a meal of herbs, and filial love touched to poetry the prose of daily household tasks.

A child was born to Margot in the spring-time with the violets and daisies, and Reine Allix was proud of the fourth generation, and as she caressed the boy's healthy, fair limbs, thought that God was indeed good to her, and that her race would live long in the place of her birth. The child resembled Bernadou, and had his clear, candid eyes. It soon learned to know the voice of "Gran'mère," and would turn from its young mother's bosom to stretch its arms to Reine Allix. It grew fair and

strong, and all the ensuing winter passed its hours curled like a dormouse or playing like a puppy at her feet in the chimney corner. Another spring and summer came, and the boy was more than a year old, with curls of gold, and cheeks like apples, and a mouth that always smiled. He could talk a little, and tumbled like a young rabbit amongst the flowering grasses. Reine Allix watched him, and her eyes filled. "God is too good," she thought. She feared that she should scarce be so willing to go to her last sleep under the trees on the hillside as she had used to be. She could not help a desire to see this child, this second Bernadou, grow up to youth and manhood; and of this she knew it was wild to dream.

It was ripe midsummer. The fields were all russet and amber with an abundance of corn. The little gardens had seldom yielded so rich a produce. The cattle and the flocks were in excellent health. There had never been a season of greater promise and prosperity for the little traffic that the village and its farms drove in sending milk and sheep and vegetable wealth to that great city which was to it as a dim, wonderful, mystic name without meaning.

One evening in this gracious and golden time the people sat out as usual when the day was done, talking from door to door, the old women knitting or spinning, the younger ones mending their husbands' or brothers' blouses or the little blue shirts of their infants, the children playing with the dogs on the sward that edged the stones of the street, and above all the great calm heavens and the glow of the sun that had set.

Reine Allix, like the others, sat before the door, for once doing nothing, but with folded hands and bended head dreamily taking pleasure in the coolness that had come with evening, and the smell of the limes that were in blossom, and the blithe chatter of Margot with the neighbors. Bernadou was close beside them, watering and weeding those flowers that were at once his pride and his recreation, making the

face of his dwelling bright and the air around it full of fragrance.

The little street was quiet in the evening light, only the laughter of the children and the gay gossip of their mothers breaking the pleasant stillness: it had been thus at evening with the Berceau centuries before their time—they thought that it would thus likewise be when centuries should have seen the youngest-born there in his grave.

Suddenly there came along the road between the trees an old man and a mule: it was Mathurin the miller, who had been that day to a little town four leagues off, which was the trade-mart and the corn-exchange of the district. He paused before the cottage of Reine Allix: he was dusty, travel-stained and sad. Margot ceased laughing among her flowers as she saw her old master. None of them knew why, yet the sight of him made the air seem cold and the night seem near.

"There is terrible news," he said, drawing a sheet of printed words from his coat-pocket—"terrible news! We are to go to war."

"War!" The whole village clustered round him. They had heard of war, far-off wars in Africa and Mexico, and some of their sons had been taken off like young wheat mown before its time; but it still remained to them a thing remote, impersonal, inconceivable, with which they had nothing to do, nor ever would have anything.

"Read!" said the old man, stretching out his sheet. The only one there who could do so, Picot the tailor, took it and spelled the news out to their wondering ears. It was the declaration of France against Prussia.

There arose a great wail from the mothers whose sons were conscripts. The rest asked in trembling, "Will it touch us?"

"Us!" echoed Picot the tailor, in contempt. "How should it touch us? Our braves will be in Berlin with another fortnight. The paper says so."

The people were silent: they were not sure what he meant by Berlin, and they were afraid to ask.

"My boy! my boy!" wailed one woman, smiting her breast. Her son was in the army.

"Marengo!" murmured Reine Allix, thinking of that far-off time in her dim youth when the horseman had flown through the dusky street and the bonfire had blazed on the highest hill above the river.

"Bread will be dear," muttered Mathurin the miller, going onward with his foot-weary mule. Bernadou stood silent, with his roses dry and thirsty round him.

"Why art thou sad?" whispered Margot with wistful eyes. "Thou art exempt from war-service, my love?"

Bernadou shook his head. "The poor will suffer somehow," was all he answered.

Yet to him, as to all in the Berceau, the news was not very terrible, because it was so vague and distant—an evil so far off and shapeless.

Monsieur Picot the tailor, who alone could read, ran from house to house, from group to group, breathless, gay and triumphant, telling them all that in two weeks more their brethren would sup in the king's palace at Berlin; and the people believed and laughed and chattered, and, standing outside their doors in the cool nights, thought that some good had come to them and theirs.

Only Reine Allix looked up to the hill above the river and murmured, "When we lit the bonfire there, Claudis lay dead;" and Bernadou, standing musing amongst his roses, said with a smile that was very grave, "Margot, see here! When Picot shouted, 'À Berlin!' he trod on my Gloire de Dijon rose and killed it."

The sultry heats and cloudless nights of the wondrous and awful summer of the year eighteen hundred and seventy passed by, and to the Berceau de Dieu it was a summer of fair promise and noble harvest, and never had the land brought forth in richer profusion for man and beast. Some of the youngest and ablest-bodied laborers were indeed drawn away to join those swift trains that hurried thousands and tens

of thousands to the frontier by the Rhine. But most of the male population were married, and were the fathers of young children, and the village was only moved to a thrill of love and of honest pride to think how its young Louis and Jean and André and Valentin were gone full of high hope and high spirit, to come back, maybe—who could say not?—with epaulettes and ribbons of honor. Why they were gone they knew not very clearly, but their superiors affirmed that they were gone to make greater the greatness of France; and the folk of the Berceau believed it, having in a corner of their quiet hearts a certain vague, dormant yet deep-rooted love, on which was written the name of their country.

News came slowly and seldom to the Berceau. Unless some one of the men rode his mule to the little town, which was but very rarely, or unless some peddler came through the village with a news-sheet or so in his pack or rumors and tidings on his lips, nothing that was done beyond its fields and woods came to it. And the truth of what it heard it had no means of measuring or sifting. It believed what it was told, without questioning; and as it reaped the harvests in the rich hot sun of August, its peasants labored cheerily in the simple and firm belief that mighty things were being done for them and theirs in the far eastern provinces by their great army, and that Louis and Jean and André and Valentin and the rest—though indeed no tidings had been heard of them—were safe and well and glorious somewhere, away where the sun rose, in the sacked palaces of the German king. Reine Allix alone of them was serious and sorrowful—she whose memories stretched back over the wide space of near a century.

"Why art thou anxious, gran'mère?" they said to her. "There is no cause. Our army is victorious everywhere; and they say our lads will send us all the Prussians' corn and cattle, so that the very beggars will have their stomachs full."

But Reine Allix shook her head, sitting knitting in the sun: "My children, I remember the days of my youth. Our army was victorious then; at least they said so. Well, all I know is that little Claudis and the boys with him never came back; and as for bread, you could not get it for love or money, and the people lay dead of famine out on the public roads."

"But that is so long ago, gran'mère!" they urged.

Reine Allix nodded. "Yes. It is long ago, my dears. But I do not think that things change very much."

They were silent out of respect for her, but amongst themselves they said, "She is very old. Nothing is as it was in her time."

One evening, when the sun was setting red over the reaped fields, two riders on trembling and sinking horses went through the village using whip and spur, and scarcely drew rein as they shouted to the cottagers to know whether they had seen go by a man running for his life. The people replied that they had seen nothing of the kind, and the horsemen pressed on, jamming their spurs into their poor beasts' steaming flanks. "If you see him, catch and hang him," they shouted as they scoured away: "he is a Prussian spy!"

"A Prussian!" the villagers echoed with a stupid stare—"a Prussian in France!"

One of the riders looked over his shoulders for a moment: "You fools! do you not know? We are beaten—beaten everywhere—and the Prussian pigs march on Paris."

The spy was not seen in the Berceau, but the news brought by his pursuers scared sleep from the eyes of every grown man that night in the little village. "It is the accursed Empire!" screamed the patriots of the wineshop. But the rest of the people were too terrified and downstricken to take heed of empires or patriots: they only thought of Louis and Jean and André and Valentin; and they collected round Reine Allix, who said to them, "My children, for love of money all our fairest fruits

and flowers—yea, even to the best blossoms of our maidenhood—were sent to be bought and sold in Paris. We sinned therein, and this is the will of God."

This was all for a time that they heard. It was a place lowly and obscure enough to be left in peace. The law pounced down on it once or twice and carried off a few more of its men for army-service, and arms were sent to it from its neighboring town, and an old soldier of the First Empire tried to instruct its remaining sons in their use. But he had no apt pupil except Bernadou, who soon learned to handle a musket with skill and with precision, and who carried his straight form gallantly and well, though his words were seldom heard and his eyes were always sad.

"You will not be called till the last," Bernadou," said the old soldier: "you are married, and maintain your grand-dame and wife and child. But a strong, muscular, well-built youth like you should not wait to be called—you should volunteer to serve France."

"I will serve France when my time comes," said Bernadou, simply, in answer. But he would not leave his fields barren, and his orchard uncared for, and his wife to sicken and starve, and his grandmother to perish alone in her ninety-third year. They jeered and flouted and upbraided him, those patriots who screamed against the fallen Empire in the wineshop, but he looked them straight in the eyes, and held his peace, and did his daily work.

"If he be called, he will not be found wanting," said Reine Allix, who knew him better than did even the young wife whom he loved.

Bernadou clung to his home with a dogged devotion. He would not go from it to fight unless compelled, but for it he would have fought like a lion. His love for his country was only an indefinite, shadowy existence that was not clear to him: he could not save a land that he had never seen, a capital that was only to him as an empty name; nor could he comprehend the danger

that his nation ran, nor could he desire to go forth and spend his life-blood in defence of things unknown to him. He was only a peasant, and he could not read nor greatly understand. But affection for his birth-place was a passion with him—mute indeed, but deep-seated as an oak. For his birth-place he would have struggled as a man can only struggle when supreme love as well as duty nerves his arm. Neither he nor Reine Allix could see that a man's duty might lie from home, but in that home both were alike ready to dare anything and to suffer everything. It was a narrow form of patriotism, yet it had nobleness, endurance and patience in it: in song it has been oftentimes deified as heroism, but in modern warfare it is punished as the blackest crime.

So Bernadou tarried in his cottage till he should be called, keeping watch by night over the safety of his village, and by day doing all he could to aid the deserted wives and mothers of the place by the tilling of their ground for them and the tending of such poor cattle as were left in their desolate fields. He and Margot and Reine Allix, between them, fed many mouths that would otherwise have been closed in death by famine, and denied themselves all except the barest and most meagre subsistence, that they might give away the little they possessed.

And all this while the war went on, but seemed far from them, so seldom did any tidings of it pierce the seclusion in which they dwelt. By and by, as the autumn went on, they learned a little more. Fugitives coming to the smithy for a horse's shoe; women fleeing to their old village homes from their base, gay life in the city; mandates from the government of defence sent to every hamlet in the country; stray news-sheets brought in by carriers or hawkers and hucksters,—all these by degrees told them of the peril of their country—vaguely indeed, and seldom truthfully, but so that by mutilated rumors they came at last to know the awful facts of the fate of Sedan, the fall of the Empire, the siege of Paris.

It did not alter their daily lives: it was still too far off and too impalpable. But a foreboding, a dread, an unspeakable woe settled down on them. Already their lands and cattle had been harassed to yield provision for the army and large towns; already their best horses had been taken for the siegetrains and the forage-wagons; already their ploughshares were perforce idle, and their children cried because of the scarcity of nourishment; already the iron of war had entered into their souls.

The little street at evening was mournful and very silent: the few who talked spoke in whispers, lest a spy should hear them, and the young ones had no strength to play: they wanted food.

"It is as it was in my youth," said Reine Allix, eating her piece of black bread and putting aside the better food prepared for her, that she might save it, unseen, for "the child."

It was horrible to her and to all of them to live in that continual terror of an unknown foe—that perpetual expectation of some ghastly, shapeless misery. They were quiet—so quiet!—but by all they heard they knew that any night, as they went to their beds, the thunder of cannon might awaken them; any morning, as they looked on their beloved fields, they knew that ere sunset the flames of war might have devoured them. They knew so little too: all they were told was so indefinite and garbled that sometimes they thought the whole was some horrid dream—thought so, at least, until they looked at their empty stables, their untilled land, their children who cried from hunger, their mothers who wept for the conscripts.

But as yet it was not so very much worse than it had been in times of bad harvest and of dire distress; and the storm which raged over the land had as yet spared this little green nest amongst the woods on the Seine.

November came. "It is a cold night, Bernadou: put on more wood," said Reine Allix. Fuel at the least was plentiful in that district, and Bernadou obeyed.

He sat at the table, working at a new

churn for his wife: he had some skill at turnery and at invention in such matters. The child slept soundly in its cradle by the hearth, smiling while it dreamed. Margot spun at her wheel. Reine Allix sat by the fire, seldom lifting her head from her long knitting-needles, except to cast a look on her grandson or at the sleeping child. The little wooden shutter of the house was closed. Some winter roses bloomed in a pot beneath the little crucifix. Bernadou's flute lay on a shelf: he had not had heart enough to play it since the news of the war had come.

Suddenly a great sobbing cry rose without—the cry of many voices, all raised in woe together. Bernadou rose, took his musket in his hand, undid his door and looked out. All the people were turned out into the street, and the women, loudly lamenting, beat their breasts and strained their children to their bosoms. There was a sullen red light in the sky to the eastward, and on the wind a low, hollow roar stole to them.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The Prussians are on us!" answered twenty voices in one accord. "That red glare is the town burning."

Then they were all still—a stillness that was more horrible than their lamentations.

Reine Allix came and stood by her grandson. "If we must die, let us die *here*," she said, in a voice that was low and soft and grave.

He took her hand and kissed it. She was content with his answer.

Margot stole forth too, and crouched behind them, holding her child to her breast. "What can they do to us?" she asked, trembling, with the rich colors of her face blanched white.

Bernadou smiled on her: "I do not know, my dear. I think even they can hardly bring death upon women and children."

"They can, and they will," said a voice from the crowd.

None answered. The street was very quiet in the darkness. Far away in the east the red glare glowed. On the wind

there was still that faint, distant ravening roar, like the roar of famished wolves: it was the roar of fire and of war.

In the silence Reine Allix spoke: "God is good. Shall we not trust in Him?"

With one great choking sob the people answered: their hearts were breaking. All night long they watched in the street—they who had done no more to bring this curse upon them than the flower-roots that slept beneath the snow. They dared not go to their beds: they knew not when the enemy might be upon them. They dared not flee: even in their own woods the foe might lurk for them. One man indeed did cry aloud, "Shall we stay here in our houses to be smoked out like bees from their hives? Let us fly!"

But the calm, firm voice of Reine Allix rebuked him: "Let who will, run like a hare from the hounds. For me and mine, we abide by our homestead."

And they were ashamed to be outdone by a woman, and a woman ninety years old, and no man spoke any more of flight. All the night long they watched in the cold and the wind, the children shivering beneath their mothers' skirts, the men sullenly watching the light of the flames in the dark, starless sky. All night long they were left alone, though far off they heard the dropping shots of scattered firing, and in the leafless woods around them the swift flight of woodland beasts startled from their sleep, and the hurrying feet of sheep terrified from their folds in the outlying fields.

The daybreak came, gray, cheerless, very cold. A dense fog, white and raw, hung over the river: in the east, where the sun, they knew, was rising, they could only see the livid light of the still towering flames and pillars of black smoke against the leaden clouds.

"We will let them come and go in peace if they will," murmured old Mathurin. "What can we do? We have no arms—no powder, hardly—no soldiers—no defence."

Bernadou said nothing, but he straight-

ened his tall limbs and in his grave blue eyes a light gleamed.

Reine Allix looked at him as she sat in the doorway of her house. "Thy hands are honest, thy heart pure, thy conscience clear. Be not afraid to die if need there be," she said to him.

He looked down and smiled on her. Margot clung to him in a passion of weeping. He clasped her close and kissed her softly, but the woman who read his heart was the woman who had held him at his birth.

By degrees the women crept timidly back into their houses, hiding their eyes, so that they should not see that horrid light against the sky, whilst the starving children clung to their breasts or to their skirts, wailing aloud in terror. The few men there were left, for the most part of them very old or else mere striplings, gathered together in a hurried council. Old Mathurin the miller and the patriots of the wineshop were agreed that there could be no resistance, whatever might befall them—that it would be best to hide such weapons as they had and any provisions that still remained to them, and yield up themselves and their homes with humble grace to the dire foe. "If we do otherwise," they said, "the soldiers will surely slay us, and what can a miserable little hamlet like this achieve against cannon and steel and fire?"

Bernadou alone raised his voice in opposition. His eye kindled, his cheek flushed, his words for once sprang from his lips like fire. "What!" he said to them, "shall we yield up our homes and our wives and our infants without a single blow? Shall we be so vile as to truckle to the enemies of France, and show that we can fear them? It were a shame, a foul shame: we were not worthy of the name of men. Let us prove to them that there are people in France who are not afraid to die. Let us hold our own so long as we can. Our muskets are good, our walls strong, our woods in this weather morasses that will suck in and swallow them if only we have tact to drive them there. Let us do what we can. The camp of the

francs-tireurs is but three leagues from us. They will be certain to come to our aid. At any rate, let us die bravely. We can do little—that may be. But if every man in France does that little that he can, that little will be great enough to drive the invaders off the soil."

Mathurin and the others screamed at him and hooted. "You are a fool!" they shouted. "You will be the undoing of us all. Do you not know that one shot fired—nay, only one musket found—and the enemy puts a torch to the whole place?"

"I know," said Bernadou, with a dark radiance in his azure eyes. "But then it is a choice between disgrace and the flames: let us only take heed to be clear of the first—the last must rage as God wills."

But they screamed and mouthed and hissed at him: "Oh yes! fine talk, fine talk! See your own roof in flames if you will: you shall not ruin ours. Do what you will with your own neck. Keep it erect or hang by it, as you choose. But you have no right to give your neighbors over to death, whether they will or no."

He strove, he pleaded, he conjured, he struggled with them half the night, with the salt tears running down his cheeks, and all his gentle blood burning with righteous wrath and loathing shame, stirred for the first time in all his life to a rude, simple, passionate eloquence. But they were not persuaded. Their few gold-pieces hidden in the rafters, their few feeble sheep starving in the folds, their own miserable lives, all hungry, woe-begone and spent in daily terrors,—these were still dear to them, and they would not imperil them. They called him a madman; they denounced him as one who would be their murderer; they threw themselves on him and demanded his musket to bury it with the rest under the altar in the old chapel on the hill.

Bernadou's eyes flashed fire; his breast heaved; his nerves quivered; he shook them off and strode a step forward. "As you live," he muttered, "I have a mind to fire on you, rather than

let you live to shame yourselves and me!"

Reine Allix, who stood by him silent all the while, laid her hand on his shoulder. "My boy," she said in his ear, "you are right, and they wrong. Yet let not dissension between brethren open the door, for the enemy to enter thereby into your homes. Do what you will with your own life, Bernadou—it is yours—but leave them to do as they will with theirs. You cannot make sheep into lions, and let not the first blood shed here be a brother's."

Bernadou's head dropped on his breast. "Do as you will," he muttered to his neighbors. They took his musket from him, and in the darkness of the night stole silently up the wooded chapel-hill and buried it, with all their other arms, under the altar where the white Christ hung. "We are safe now," said Mathurin the miller to the patriots of the tavern. "Had that madman had his way, he had destroyed us all."

Reine Allix softly led her grandson across his own threshold, and drew his head down to hers and kissed him between the eyes. "You did what you could, Bernadou," she said to him, "let the rest come as it will."

Then she turned from him, and flung her cloak over her head and sank down, weeping bitterly, for she had lived through ninety-three years only to see this agony at the last.

Bernadou, now that all means of defence was gone from him, and the only thing left to him to deal with was his own life, had become quiet and silent and passionless, as was his habit. He would have fought like a mastiff for his home, but this they had forbidden him to do, and he was passive and without hope. He shut to his door, and sat down with his hand in that of Reine Allix and his arm around his wife. "There is nothing to do but to wait," he said sadly. The day seemed very long in coming.

The firing ceased for a while: then its roll commenced afresh, and grew nearer to the village. Then again all was still.

At noon a shepherd staggered into

the place, pale, bleeding, bruised, covered with mire. The Prussians, he told them, had forced him to be their guide, had knotted him tight to a trooper's saddle, and had dragged him with them until he was half dead with fatigue and pain. At night he had broken from them and had fled: they were close at hand, he said, and had burned the town from end to end because a man had fired at them from a housetop. That was all he knew. Bernadou, who had gone out to hear his news, returned into the house and sat down and hid his face within his hands. "If I resist you are all lost," he muttered. "And yet to yield like a cur!" It was a piteous question, whether to follow the instinct in him and see his birth-place in flames and his family slaughtered for his act, or to crush out the manhood in him and live, loathing himself as a coward for evermore?

Reine Allix looked at him, and laid her hand on his bowed head, and her voice was strong and tender as music: "Fret not thyself, my beloved. When the moment comes, then do as thine own heart and the whisper of God in it bid thee."

A great sob answered her: it was the first since his earliest infancy that she had ever heard from Bernadou.

It grew dark. The autumn day died. The sullen clouds dropped scattered rain. The red leaves were blown in millions by the wind. The little houses on either side the road were dark, for the dwellers in them dared not show any light that might be a star to allure to them the footsteps of their foes. Bernadou sat with his arms on the table, and his head resting on them. Margot nursed her son: Reine Allix prayed.

Suddenly in the street without there was the sound of many feet of horses and of men, the shouting of angry voices, the splashing of quick steps in the watery ways, the screams of women, the flash of steel through the gloom. Bernadou sprang to his feet, his face pale, his blue eyes dark as night. "They are come!" he said under his breath. It was not fear that he

felt, nor horror: it was rather a passion of love for his birth-place and his nation—a passion of longing to struggle and to die for both. And he had no weapon!

He drew his house door open with a steady hand, and stood on his own threshold and faced these, his enemies. The street was full of them—some mounted, some on foot: crowds of them swarmed in the woods and on the roads. They had settled on the village as vultures on a dead lamb's body. It was a little, lowly place: it might well have been left in peace. It had had no more share in the war than a child still unborn, but it came in the victors' way, and their mailed heel crushed it as they passed. They had heard that arms were hidden and francs-tireurs sheltered there, and they had swooped down on it and held it hard and fast. Some were told off to search the chapel; some to ransack the dwellings; some to seize such food and bring such cattle as there might be left; some to seek out the devious paths that crossed and recrossed the fields; and yet there still remained in the little street hundreds of armed men, force enough to awe a citadel or storm a breach.

The people did not attempt to resist. They stood passive, dry-eyed in misery, looking on whilst the little treasures of their household lives were swept away for ever, and ignorant what fate by fire or iron might be their portion ere the night was done. They saw the corn that was their winter store to save their offspring from famine poured out like ditch-water. They saw oats and wheat flung down to be trodden into a slough of mud and filth. They saw the walnut presses in their kitchens broken open, and their old heirlooms of silver, centuries old, borne away as booty. They saw the oak cupboards in their wives' bed-chambers ransacked, and the homespun linen and the quaint bits of plate that had formed their nuptial dowers cast aside in derision or trampled into a battered heap. They saw the pet lamb of their infants, the silver ear-rings of their brides, the brave tank-

ards they had drunk their marriage wine in, the tame bird that flew to their whistle, all seized for food or seized for spoil. They saw all this, and had to stand by with mute tongues and passive hands, lest any glance of wrath or gesture of revenge should bring the leaden bullet in their children's throats or the yellow flame amidst their homesteads. Greater agony the world cannot hold.

Under the porch of the cottage, by the sycamores, one group stood and looked, silent and very still—Bernadou, erect, pale, calm, with a fierce scorn burning in his eyes; Margot, quiet, because he wished her so, holding to her the rosy and golden beauty of her son; Reine Allix, with a patient horror on her face, her figure drawn to its full height, and her hands holding to her breast the crucifix. They stood thus, waiting they knew not what, only resolute to show no cowardice and meet no shame.

Behind them was the dull, waning glow of the wood-fire on the hearth which had been the centre of all their hopes and joys; before them the dim, dark country, and the woestricken faces of their neighbors, and the moving soldiery with their torches, and the quivering forms of the half-dying horses.

Suddenly a voice arose from the armed mass: "Bring me the peasant hither."

Bernadou was seized by several hands and forced and dragged from his door out to the place where the leader of the Uhlans sat on a white charger that shook and snorted blood in its exhaustion. Bernadou cast off the alien grasp that held him, and stood erect before his foes. He was no longer pale, and his eyes were clear and steadfast.

"You look less a fool than the rest," said the Prussian commander. "You know this country well?"

"Well!" The country in whose fields and woodlands he had wandered from his infancy, and whose every meadow-path and wayside tree and flower-sown brook he knew by heart as a lover knows the lines of his mistress's face!

"You have arms here?" pursued the German.

"We had."

"What have you done with them?"

"If I had had my way, you would not need ask. You would have felt them."

The Prussian looked at him keenly, doing homage to the boldness of the answer. "Will you confess where they are?"

"No."

"You know the penalty for concealment of arms is death?"

"You have made it so."

"We have, and Prussian will is French law. You are a bold man: you merit death. But still, you know the country well?"

Bernadou smiled, as a mother might smile were any foolish enough to ask her if she remembered the look her dead child's face had worn.

"If you know it well," pursued the Prussian, "I will give you a chance. Lay hold of my stirrup-leather and be lashed to it, and show me straight as the crow flies to where the weapons are hidden. If you do, I will leave you your life. If you do not—"

"If I do not?"

"You will be shot."

Bernadou was silent: his eyes glanced through the mass of soldiers to the little cottage under the trees opposite: the two there were straining to behold him, but the soldiers pushed them back, so that in the flare of the torches they could not see, nor in the tumult hear. He thanked God for it.

"Your choice?" asked the Uhlan impatiently, after a moment's pause.

Bernadou's lips were white, but they did not tremble as he answered, "I am no traitor." And his eyes as he spoke went softly to the little porch where the light glowed from that hearth beside which he would never again sit with the creatures he loved around him.

The German looked at him: "Is that a boast or a fact?"

"I am no traitor," Bernadou answered simply once more.

The Prussian gave a sign to his troop-

ers. There was the sharp report of a double shot, and Bernadou fell dead. One bullet had pierced his brain, the other was bedded in his lungs. The soldiers kicked aside the warm and quivering body. It was only a peasant killed!

With a shriek that rose above the roar of the wind, and cut like steel to every human heart that beat there, Reine Allix forced her way through the throng, and fell on her knees beside him, and caught him in her arms, and laid his head upon her breast, where he had used to sleep his softest sleep in infancy and childhood. "It is God's will, it is God's will!" she muttered; and then she laughed—a laugh so terrible that the blood of the boldest there ran cold.

Margot followed her and looked, and stood dry-eyed and silent; then flung herself and the child she carried in her arms beneath the hoof of the white charger. "End your work!" she shrieked to them. "You have killed him—kill us. Have you not mercy enough for that?"

The horse, terrified and snorting blood, plunged and trampled the ground: his fore foot struck the child's golden head and stamped its face out of all human likeness. Some peasants pulled Margot from the lashing hoofs: she was quite dead, though neither wound nor bruise was on her.

Reine Allix neither looked nor paused. With all her strength she had begun to drag the body of Bernadou across the threshold of his house. "He shall lie at home, he shall lie at home," she muttered. She would not believe that already he was dead. With all the force of her earliest womanhood she lifted him, and half drew half bore him into the home that he had loved, and laid him down upon the hearth, and knelt by him, caressing him as though he were once more a child, and saying softly, "Hush!" for her mind was gone, and she fancied that he only slept.

Without, the tumult of the soldiery increased: they found the arms hidden under the altar on the hill; they seized

five peasants to slay them for the dire offence. The men struggled, and would not go as the sheep to the shambles. They were shot down in the street before the eyes of their children. Then the order was given to fire the place in punishment, and leave it to its fate.

The torches were flung with a laugh on the dry thatched roofs — brands snatched from the house-fires on the hearths were tossed amongst the dwelling-houses and the barns. The straw and timber flared alight like tow.

An old man, her nearest neighbor, rushed to the cottage of Reine Allix and seized her by the arm. "They fire the Berceau," he screamed. "Quick! quick! or you will be burned alive!"

Reine Allix looked up with a smile: "Be quiet! Do you not see? He sleeps."

The old man shook her, implored her, strove to drag her away—in desperation pointed to the roof above, which was already in flames.

Reine Allix looked: at that sight her mind cleared and regained consciousness: she remembered all, she understood all: she knew that he was dead. "Go in peace and save yourself," she said in the old sweet, strong tone of an earlier day. "As for me, I am very old. I and my dead will stay together at home."

The man fled, and left her to her choice.

The great curled flames and the livid vapors closed around her: she never moved. The death was fierce but swift, and even in death she and the

one whom she had loved and reared were not divided. The end soon came. From hill to hill the Berceau de Dieu broke into flames. The village was a lake of fire, into which the statue of the Christ, burning and reeling, fell. Some few peasants, with their wives and children, fled to the woods, and there escaped one torture to perish more slowly of cold and famine. All other things perished. The rapid stream of the flame licked up all there was in its path. The bare trees raised their leafless branches on fire at a thousand points. The stores of corn and fruit were lapped by millions of crimson tongues. The pigeons flew screaming from their roosts and sank into the smoke. The dogs were suffocated on the thresholds they had guarded all their lives. The calf was stifled in the byre. The sheep ran bleating with the wool burning on their living bodies. The little caged birds fluttered helpless, and then dropped, scorched to cinders. The aged and the sick were stifled in their beds. All things perished.

The Berceau de Dieu was as one vast furnace, in which every living creature was caught and consumed and changed to ashes. The tide of war has rolled on and left it a blackened waste, a smoking ruin, wherein not so much as a mouse may creep or a bird may nestle. It is gone, and its place can know it never more.

Never more. But who is there to care? It was but as a leaf which the great storm swept away as it passed.



A DOG OF FLANDERS:

A STORY OF NOËL.

NELLO and Patrasche were left all alone in the world.

They were friends in a friendship closer than brotherhood. Nello was a little Ardennois—Patrasche was a big Fleming. They were both of the same age by length of years, yet one was still young, and the other was already old. They had dwelt together almost all their days: both were orphaned and destitute, and owed their lives to the same hand. It had been the beginning of the tie between them, their first bond of sympathy; and it had strengthened day by day, and had grown with their growth, firm and indissoluble, until they loved one another very greatly.

Their home was a little hut on the edge of a little village—a Flemish village a league from Antwerp, set amidst flat breadths of pasture and corn-lands, with long lines of poplars and of alders bending in the breeze on the edge of the great canal which ran through it. It had about a score of houses and homesteads, with shutters of bright green or sky-blue, and roofs rose-red or black and white, and walls whitewashed until they shone in the sun like snow. In the centre of the village stood a windmill, placed on a little moss-grown slope: it was a landmark to all the level country round. It had once been painted scarlet, sails and all, but that had been in its infancy, half a century or more earlier, when it had ground wheat for the soldiers of Napoleon; and it was now a ruddy brown, tanned by wind and weather. It went queerly by fits and starts, as though rheumatic and stiff in the joints from age, but it served the whole neighborhood, which would have thought it almost as impious to carry grain elsewhere as to attend any other religious service than the mass that was performed at the altar of the little

old gray church, with its conical steeple, which stood opposite to it, and whose single bell rang morning, noon and night with that strange, subdued, hollow sadness which every bell that hangs in the Low Countries seems to gain as an integral part of its melody.

Within sound of the little melancholy clock almost from their birth upward, they had dwelt together, Nello and Patrasche, in the little hut on the edge of the village, with the cathedral spire of Antwerp rising in the north-east, beyond the great green plain of seeding grass and spreading corn that stretched away from them like a tideless, changeless sea. It was the hut of a very old man, of a very poor man—of old Jehan Daas, who in his time had been a soldier, and who remembered the wars that had trampled the country as oxen tread down the furrows, and who had brought from his service nothing except a wound, which had made him a cripple.

When old Jehan Daas had reached his full eighty, his daughter had died in the Ardennes, hard by Stavelot, and had left him in legacy her two-year old son. The old man could ill contrive to support himself, but he took up the additional burden uncomplainingly, and it soon became welcome and precious to him. Little Nello—which was but a pet diminutive for Nicolas—throve with him, and the old man and the little child lived in the poor little hut contentedly.

It was a very humble little mud-hut indeed, but it was clean and white as a sea-shell, and stood in a small plot of garden-ground that yielded beans and herbs and pumpkins. They were very poor, terribly poor—many a day they had nothing at all to eat. They never by any chance had enough: to have had enough to eat would have been to

have reached paradise at once. But the old man was very gentle and good to the boy, and the boy was a beautiful, innocent, truthful, tender-natured creature; and they were happy on a crust and a few leaves of cabbage, and asked no more of earth or Heaven; save indeed that Patrasche should be always with them, since without Patrasche where would they have been?

For Patrasche was their alpha and omega; their treasury and granary; their store of gold and wand of wealth; their bread-winner and minister; their only friend and comforter. Patrasche dead or gone from them, they must have laid themselves down and died likewise. Patrasche was body, brains, hands, head and feet to both of them: Patrasche was their very life, their very soul. For Jehan Daas was old and a cripple, and Nello was but a child; and Patrasche was their dog.

A dog of Flanders—yellow of hide, large of head and limb, with wolf-like ears that stood erect, and legs bowed and feet widened in the muscular development wrought in his breed by many generations of hard service. Patrasche came of a race which had toiled hard and cruelly from sire to son in Flanders many a century—slaves of slaves, dogs of the people, beasts of the shafts and the harness, creatures that lived straining their sinews in the gall of the cart, and died breaking their hearts on the flints of the streets.

Patrasche had been born of parents who had labored hard all their days over the sharp-set stones of the various cities and the long, shadowless, weary roads of the two Flanders and of Brabant. He had been born to no other heritage than those of pain and of toil. He had been fed on curses and baptized with blows. Why not? It was a Christian country, and Patrasche was but a dog. Before he was fully grown he had known the bitter gall of the cart and the collar. Before he had entered his thirteenth month he had become the property of a hardware-dealer, who was accustomed to wander over the land north and south, from the blue sea to the green

mountains. They sold him for a small price, because he was so young.

This man was a drunkard and a brute. The life of Patrasche was a life of hell. To deal the tortures of hell on the animal creation is a way which the Christians have of showing their belief in it. His purchaser was a sullen, ill-living, brutal Brabantois, who heaped his cart full with pots and pans and flagons and buckets, and other wares of crockery and brass and tin, and left Patrasche to draw the load as best he might, whilst he himself lounged idly by the side in fat and sluggish ease, smoking his black pipe and stopping at every wineshop or café on the road.

Happily for Patrasche—or unhappily—he was very strong: he came of an iron race, long born and bred to such cruel travail; so that he did not die, but managed to drag on a wretched existence under the brutal burdens, the scaring lashes, the hunger, the thirst, the blows, the curses and the exhaustion which are the only wages with which the Flemings repay the most patient and laborious of all their fourfooted victims. One day, after two years of this long and deadly agony, Patrasche was going on as usual along one of the straight, dusty, unlovely roads that lead to the city of Rubens. It was full midsummer, and very warm. His cart was very heavy, piled high with goods in metal and in earthenware. His owner sauntered on without noticing him otherwise than by the crack of the whip as it curled round his quivering loins. The Brabantois had paused to drink beer himself at every wayside house, but he had forbidden Patrasche to stop a moment for a draught from the canal. Going along thus, in the full sun, on a scorching highway, having eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, and, which was far worse to him, not having tasted water for nearly twelve, being blind with dust, sore with blows and stupefied with the merciless weight which dragged upon his loins, Patrasche, for once, staggered and foamed a little at the mouth, and fell.

He fell in the middle of the white, dusty road, in the full glare of the sun:

he was sick unto death, and motionless. His master gave him the only medicine in his pharmacy—kicks and oaths and blows with a cudgel of oak, which had been often the only food and drink, the only wage and reward, ever offered to him. But Patrasche was beyond the reach of any torture or of any curses. Patrasche lay, dead to all appearances, down in the white powder of the summer dust. After a while, finding it useless to assail his ribs with punishment and his ears with maledictions, the Brabantois—deeming life gone in him, or going so nearly that his carcass was for ever useless, unless indeed some one should strip it of the skin for gloves—cursed him fiercely in farewell, struck off the leathern bands of the harness, kicked his body heavily aside into the grass, and, groaning and muttering in savage wrath, pushed the cart lazily along the road up hill, and left the dying dog there for the ants to sting and for the crows to pick.

It was the last day before Kermesse away at Louvain, and the Brabantois was in haste to reach the fair and get a good place for his truck of brass wares. He was in fierce wrath, because Patrasche had been a strong and much-enduring animal, and because he himself had now the hard task of pushing his charette all the way to Louvain. But to stay to look after Patrasche never entered his thoughts: the beast was dying and useless, and he would steal, to replace him, the first large dog that he found wandering alone out of sight of its master. Patrasche had cost him nothing, or next to nothing, and for two long, cruel years had made him toil ceaselessly in his service from sunrise to sunset, through summer and winter, in fair weather and foul.

He had got a fair use and a good profit out of Patrasche: being human, he was wise, and left the dog to draw his last breath alone in the ditch, and have his bloodshot eyes plucked out as they might be by the birds, whilst he himself went on his way to beg and to steal, to eat and to drink, to dance and to sing, in the mirth at Louvain. A dying dog,

a dog of the cart—why should he waste hours over its agonies at peril of losing a handful of copper coins, at peril of a shout of laughter?

Patrasche lay there, flung in the grass-green ditch. It was a busy road that day, and hundreds of people, on foot and on mules, in wagons or in carts, went by, tramping quickly and joyously on to Louvain. Some saw him, most did not even look: all passed on. A dead dog more or less—it was nothing in Brabant: it would be nothing anywhere in the world.

After a time, amongst the holiday-makers, there came a little old man who was bent and lame, and very feeble. He was in no guise for feasting: he was very poorly and miserably clad, and he dragged his silent way slowly through the dust amongst the pleasure-seekers. He looked at Patrasche, paused, wondered, turned aside, then kneeled down in the rank grass and weeds of the ditch, and surveyed the dog with kindly eyes of pity. There was with him a little rosy, fair-haired, dark-eyed child of a few years old, who pattered in amidst the bushes, that were for him breast-high, and stood gazing with a pretty seriousness upon the poor great, quiet beast.

Thus it was that these two first met—the little Nello and the big Patrasche.

The upshot of that day was, that old Jehan Daas, with much laborious effort, drew the sufferer homeward to his own little hut, which was a stone's throw off amidst the fields, and there tended him with so much care that the sickness, which had been a brain-seizure, brought on by heat and thirst and exhaustion, with time and shade and rest passed away, and health and strength returned, and Patrasche staggered up again upon his four stout, tawny legs.

Now for many weeks he had been useless, powerless, sore, near to death; but all this time he had heard no rough word, had felt no harsh touch, but only the pitying murmurs of the little child's voice and the soothing caress of the old man's hand.

In his sickness they too had grown to care for him, this lonely old man and

the little happy child. He had a corner of the hut, with a heap of dry grass for his bed; and they had learned to listen eagerly for his breathing in the dark night, to tell them that he lived; and when he first was well enough to essay a loud, hollow, broken bay, they laughed aloud, and almost wept together for joy at such a sign of his sure restoration; and little Nello, in delighted glee, hung round his rugged neck with chains of marguerites, and kissed him with fresh and ruddy lips.

So then, when Patrasche arose, himself again, strong, big, gaunt, powerful, his great wistful eyes had a gentle astonishment in them that there were no curses to rouse him and no blows to drive him; and his heart awakened to a mighty love, which never wavered once in its fidelity whilst life abode with him.

But Patrasche, being a dog, was grateful. Patrasche lay pondering long with grave, tender, musing brown eyes, watching the movements of his friends.

Now, the old soldier, Jehan Daas, could do nothing for his living but limp about a little with a small cart, with which he carried daily the milk-cans of those happier neighbors who owned cattle away into the town of Antwerp. The villagers gave him the employment a little out of charity—more because it suited them well to send their milk into the town by so honest a carrier, and bide at home themselves to look after their gardens, their cows, their poultry or their little fields. But it was becoming hard work for the old man. He was eighty-three, and Antwerp was a good league off, or more.

Patrasche watched the milk-cans come and go that one day when he had got well and was lying in the sun with the wreath of marguerites round his tawny neck.

The next morning, Patrasche, before the old man had touched the cart, arose and walked to it and placed himself betwixt its handles, and testified as plainly as dumb show could do his desire and his ability to work in return for the bread of charity that he had eaten. Jehan Daas resisted long, for the old man was

one of those who thought it a foul shame to bind dogs to labor for which Nature never formed them. But Patrasche would not be gainsayed: finding they did not harness him, he tried to draw the cart onward with his teeth.

At length Jehan Daas gave way, vanquished by the persistence and the gratitude of this creature whom he had succored. He fashioned his cart so that Patrasche could run in it, and this he did every morning of his life thenceforward.

When the winter came, Jehan Daas thanked the blessed fortune that had brought him to the dying dog in the ditch that fair-day of Louvain; for he was very old, and he grew feeblener with each year, and he would ill have known how to pull his load of milk-cans over the snows and through the deep ruts in the mud if it had not been for the strength and the industry of the animal he had befriended. As for Patrasche, it seemed heaven to him. After the frightful burdens that his old master had compelled him to strain under, at the call of the whip at every step, it seemed nothing to him but amusement to step out with this little light green cart, with its bright brass cans, by the side of the gentle old man who always paid him with a tender caress and with a kindly word. Besides, his work was over by three or four in the day, and after that time he was free to do as he would—to stretch himself, to sleep in the sun, to wander in the fields, to romp with the young child or to play with his fellow-dogs. Patrasche was very happy.

Fortunately for his peace, his former owner was killed in a drunken brawl at the kermesse of Mechlin, and so sought not after him nor disturbed him in his new and well-loved home.

A few years later, old Jehan Daas, who had always been a cripple, became so paralyzed with rheumatism that it was impossible for him to go out with the cart any more. Then little Nello, being now grown to his sixth year of age, and knowing the town well from having accompanied his grandfather so many times, took his place beside the cart, and

sold the milk and received the coins in exchange, and brought them back to their respective owners with a pretty grace and seriousness which charmed all who beheld him.

The little Ardennois was a beautiful child, with dark, grave, tender eyes, and a lovely bloom upon his face, and fair locks that clustered to his throat; and many an artist sketched the group as it went by him—the green cart with the brass flagons of Teniers and Mieris and Van Tal, and the great tawny-colored, massive dog, with his belled harness that chimed cheerily as he went, and the small figure that ran beside him which had little white feet in great wooden shoes, and a soft, grave, innocent, happy face like the little fair children of Rubens.

Nello and Patrasche did the work so well and so joyfully together that Jehan Daas himself, when the summer came and he was better again, had no need to stir out, but could sit in the doorway in the sun and see them go forth through the garden wicket, and then doze and dream and pray a little, and then awake again as the clock tolled three and watch for their return. And on their return Patrasche would shake himself free of his harness with a bay of glee, and Nello would recount with pride the doings of the day; and they would all go in together to their meal of rye bread and milk or soup, and would see the shadows lengthen over the great plain, and see the twilight veil the fair cathedral spire; and then lie down together to sleep peacefully while the old man said a prayer.

So the days and the years went on, and the lives of Nello and Patrasche were happy, innocent and healthful.

In the spring and summer especially were they glad. Flanders is not a lovely land, and around the burgh of Rubens it is perhaps least lovely of all. Corn and colza, pasture and plough, succeed each other on the characterless plain in wearying repetition, and save by some gaunt gray tower, with its peal of pathetic bells, or some figure coming athwart the fields, made picturesque by

a gleaner's bundle or a woodman's fagot, there is no change, no variety, no beauty anywhere; and he who has dwelt upon the mountains or amidst the forests feels oppressed as by imprisonment with the tedium and the endlessness of that vast and dreary level. But it is green and very fertile, and it has wide horizons that have a certain charm of their own even in their dullness and monotony; and amongst the rushes by the water-side the flowers grow, and the trees rise tall and fresh where the barges glide with their great hulks black against the sun, and their little green barrels and vari-colored flags gay against the leaves. Anyway, there is greenery and breadth of space enough to be as good as beauty to a child and a dog; and these two asked no better, when their work was done, than to lie buried in the lush grasses on the side of the canal, and watch the cumbrous vessels drifting by and bringing the crisp salt smell of the sea amongst the blossoming scents of the country summer.

True, in the winter it was harder, and they had to rise in the darkness and the bitter cold, and they had seldom as much as they could have eaten any day, and the hut was scarce better than a shed when the nights were cold, although it looked so pretty in warm weather, buried in a great kindly-clambering vine, that never bore fruit, indeed, but which covered it with luxuriant green tracery all through the months of blossom and harvest. In winter the winds found many holes in the walls of the poor little hut, and the vine was black and leafless, and the bare lands looked very bleak and drear without, and sometimes within the floor was flooded and then frozen. In winter it was hard, and the snow numbed the little white limbs of Nello, and the icicles cut the brave, untiring feet of Patrasche.

But even then they were never heard to lament, either of them. The child's wooden shoes and the dog's four legs would trot manfully together over the frozen fields to the chime of the bells on the harness; and then sometimes, in the streets of Antwerp, some housewife

would bring them a bowl of soup and a handful of bread, or some kindly trader would throw some billets of fuel into the little cart as it went homeward, or some woman in their own village would bid them keep some share of the milk they carried for their own food; and then they would run over the white lands, through the early darkness, bright and happy, and burst with a shout of joy into their home.

So, on the whole, it was well with them, very well; and Patrasche, meeting on the highway or in the public streets the many dogs who toiled from daybreak into nightfall, paid only with blows and curses, and loosened from the shafts with a kick to starve and freeze as best they might,—Patrasche in his heart was very grateful to his fate, and thought it the fairest and the kindest the world could hold. Though he was often very hungry indeed when he lay down at night; though he had to work in the heats of summer noons and the rasping chills of winter dawns; though his feet were often tender with wounds from the sharp edges of the jagged pavement; though he had to perform tasks beyond his strength and against his nature,—yet he was grateful and content: he did his duty with each day, and the eyes that he loved smiled down on him. It was sufficient for Patrasche.

There was only one thing which caused Patrasche any uneasiness in his life, and it was this. Antwerp, as all the world knows, is full at every turn of old piles of stones, dark and ancient and majestic, standing in crooked courts, jammed against gateways and taverns, rising by the water's edge, with bells ringing above them in the air, and ever and again out of their arched doors a swell of music pealing. There they remain, the grand old sanctuaries of the past, shut in amidst the squalor, the hurry, the crowds, the unloveliness and the commerce of the modern world, and all day long the clouds drift and the birds circle and the winds sigh around them, and beneath the earth at their feet there sleeps—RUBENS.

And the greatness of the mighty

Master still rests upon Antwerp, and wherever we turn in its narrow streets his glory lies therein, so that all mean things are thereby transfigured; and as we pace slowly through the winding ways, and by the edge of the stagnant water, and through the noisome courts, his spirit abides with us, and the heroic beauty of his visions is about us, and the stones that once felt his footsteps and bore his shadow seem to arise and speak of him with living voices. For the city which is the tomb of Rubens still lives to us through him, and him alone.

It is so quiet there by that great white sepulchre—so quiet, save only when the organ peals and the choir cries aloud the *Salve Regina* or the *Kyrie Eleison*. Sure no artist ever had a greater grave-stone than that pure marble sanctuary gives to him in the heart of his birth-place in the chancel of St. Jacques.

Without Rubens, what were Antwerp? A dirty, dusky, bustling mart, which no man would ever care to look upon save the traders who do business on its wharves. With Rubens, to the whole world of men it is a sacred name, a sacred soil, a Bethlehem where a god of Art saw light, a Golgotha where a god of Art lies dead.

O nations! closely should you treasure your great men, for by them alone will the future know of you. Flanders in her generations has been wise. In his life she glorified this greatest of her sons, and in his death she magnifies his name. But her wisdom is very rare.

Now, the trouble of Patrasche was this. Into these great, sad piles of stones, that reared their melancholy majesty above the crowded roofs, the child Nello would many and many a time enter, and disappear through their dark, arched portals, whilst Patrasche, left without upon the pavement, would wearily and vainly ponder on what could be the charm which thus allured from him his inseparable and beloved companion. Once or twice he did essay to see for himself, clattering up the steps with his milk-cart behind him; but thereon he had been always sent back again sum-

marily by a tall custodian in black clothes and silver chains of office; and fearful of bringing his little master into trouble, he desisted, and remained crouched patiently before the churches until such time as the boy reappeared. It was not the fact of his going into them which disturbed Patrasche: he knew that people went to church: all the village went to the small, tumbledown, gray pile opposite the red windmill. What troubled him was that little Nello always looked strangely when he came out, always very flushed or very pale; and whenever he returned home after such visitations would sit silent and dreaming, not caring to play, but gazing out at the evening skies beyond the line of the canal, very subdued and almost sad.

What was it? wondered Patrasche. He thought it could not be good or natural for the little lad to be so grave, and in his dumb fashion he tried all he could to keep Nello by him in the sunny fields or in the busy market-place. But to the churches Nello would go: most often of all would he go to the great cathedral; and Patrasche, left without on the stones by the iron fragments of Quentin Matsys' gate, would stretch himself and yawn and sigh, and even howl now and then, all in vain, until the doors closed and the child perforce came forth again, and winding his arms about the dog's neck would kiss him on his broad, tawny-colored forehead, and murmur always the same words: "If I could only see them, Patrasche!—if I could only see them!"

What were they? pondered Patrasche, looking up with large, wistful, sympathetic eyes.

One day, when the custodian was out of the way and the doors left ajar, he got in for a moment after his little friend and saw. "They" were two great covered pictures on either side of the choir.

Nello was kneeling, rapt as in an ecstasy, before the altar-picture of the Assumption, and when he noticed Patrasche, and rose and drew the dog gently out into the air, his face was wet with tears, and he looked up at the

veiled places as he passed them, and murmured to his companion, "It is so terrible not to see them, Patrasche, just because one is poor and cannot pay! He never meant that the poor should not see them when he painted them, I am sure. He would have had us see them any day, every day: that I am sure. And they keep them shrouded there—shrouded in the dark, the beautiful things!—and they never feel the light, and no eyes look on them, unless rich people come and pay. If I could only see them, I would be content to die."

But he could not see them, and Patrasche could not help him, for to gain the silver piece that the church exacts as the price for looking on the glories of the Elevation of the Cross and the Descent of the Cross was a thing as utterly beyond the powers of either of them as it would have been to scale the heights of the cathedral spire. They had never so much as a sou to spare: if they cleared enough to get a little wood for the stove, a little broth for the pot, it was the utmost they could do. And yet the heart of the child was set in sore and endless longing upon beholding the greatness of the two veiled Rubens.

The whole soul of the little Ardennois thrilled and stirred with an absorbing passion for Art. Going on his ways through the old city in the early days before the sun or the people had risen, Nello, who looked only a little peasant-boy, with a great dog drawing milk to sell from door to door, was in a heaven of dreams whereof Rubens was the god. Nello, cold and hungry, with stockingless feet in wooden shoes, and the winter winds blowing amongst his curls and lifting his poor thin garments, was in a rapture of meditation, wherein all that he saw was the beautiful fair face of the Mary of the Assumption, with the waves of her golden hair lying upon her shoulders, and the light of an eternal sun shining down upon her brow. Nello, reared in poverty, and buffeted by fortune, and untaught in letters, and unheeded by men, had the compensation or the curse which is called Genius.

No one knew it. He as little as any.

No one knew it. Only indeed Patrasche, who, being with him always, saw him draw with chalk upon the stones any and every thing that grew or breathed, heard him on his little bed of hay murmur all manner of timid, pathetic prayers to the spirit of the great Master; watched his gaze darken and his face radiate at the evening glow of sunset or the rosy rising of the dawn; and felt many and many a time the tears of a strange, nameless pain and joy, mingled together, fall hotly from the bright young eyes upon his own wrinkled, yellow forehead.

"I should go to my grave quite content if I thought, Nello, that when thou growest a man thou couldst own this hut and the little plot of ground, and labor for thyself, and be called Baas by thy neighbors," said the old man Jehan many an hour from his bed. For to own a bit of soil, and to be called Baas—master—by the hamlet round, is to have achieved the highest ideal of a Flemish peasant; and the old soldier, who had wandered over all the earth in his youth, and had brought nothing back, deemed in his old age that to live and die on one spot in contented humility was the fairest fate he could desire for his darling. But Nello said nothing.

The same leaven was working in him that in other times begat Rubens and Jordaens and the Van Eycks, and all their wondrous tribe, and in times more recent begat in the green country of the Ardennes, where the Meuse washes the old walls of Dijon, the great artist of the Patroclus, whose genius is too near us for us aright to measure its divinity.

Nello dreamed of other things in the future than of tilling the little rood of earth, and living under the wattle roof, and being called Baas by neighbors a little poorer or a little less poor than himself. The cathedral spire, where it rose beyond the fields in the ruddy evening skies or in the dim, gray, misty mornings, said other things to him than this. But these he told only to Patrasche, whispering, childlike, his fancies in the dog's ear when they went together at their work through the fogs of the day-

break, or lay together at their rest amongst the rustling rushes by the water's side.

For such dreams are not easily shaped into speech to awake the slow sympathies of human auditors; and they would only have sorely perplexed and troubled the poor old man bedridden in his corner, who, for his part, whenever he had trodden the streets of Antwerp, had thought the daub of blue and red that they called a Madonna, on the walls of the wine-shop where he drank his sou's worth of black beer, quite as good as any of the famous altar-pieces for which the stranger folk traveled far and wide into Flanders from every land on which the good sun shone.

There was only one other beside Patrasche to whom Nello could talk at all of his daring fantasies. This other was little Alois, who lived at the old red mill on the grassy mound, and whose father, the miller, was the best-to-do husbandman in all the village. Little Alois was only a pretty baby with soft round, rosy features, made lovely by those sweet dark eyes that the Spanish rule has left in so many a Flemish face, in testimony of the Alvan dominion, as Spanish art has left broadsown throughout the country majestic palaces and stately courts, gilded house-fronts and sculptured lintels—histories in blazonry and poems in stone.

Little Alois was often with Nello and Patrasche. They played in the fields, they ran in the snow, they gathered the daisies and bilberries, they went up to the old gray church together, and they often sat together by the broad wood-fire in the mill-house. Little Alois, indeed, was the richest child in the hamlet. She had neither brother nor sister; her blue serge dress had never a hole in it; at kermesse she had as many gilded nuts and Agni Dei in sugar as her hands could hold; and when she went up for her first communion her flaxen curls were covered with a cap of richest Mechlin lace, which had been her mother's and her grandmother's before it came to her. Men spoke already, though she had but twelve years, of the good wife

she would be for their sons to woo and win; but she herself was a little gay, simple child, in nowise conscious of her heritage, and she loved no playfellows so well as Jehan Daas' grandson and his dog.

One day her father, Baas Cogez, a good man, but somewhat stern, came on a pretty group in the long meadow behind the mill, where the aftermath had that day been cut. It was his little daughter sitting amidst the hay, with the great tawny head of Patrasche on her lap, and many wreaths of poppies and blue cornflowers round them both: on a clean smooth slab of pine wood the boy Nello drew their likeness with a stick of charcoal.

The miller stood and looked at the portrait with tears in his eyes, it was so strangely like, and he loved his only child closely and well. Then he roughly chid the little girl for idling there whilst her mother needed her within, and sent her indoors crying and afraid: then, turning, he snatched the wood from Nello's hands. "Dost do much of such folly?" he asked, but there was a tremble in his voice.

Nello colored and hung his head. "I draw everything I see," he murmured.

The miller was silent: then he stretched his hand out with a franc in it. "It is folly, as I say, and evil waste of time: nevertheless, it is like Alois, and will please the house-mother. Take this silver bit for it and leave it for me."

The color died out of the face of the young Ardennois: he lifted his head and put his hands behind his back. "Keep your money and the portrait both, Baas Cogez," he said simply. "You have been often good to me." Then he called Patrasche to him, and walked away across the fields.

"I could have seen them with that franc," he murmured to Patrasche, "but I could not sell her picture—not even for them."

Baas Cogez went into his mill-house sore troubled in his mind. "That lad must not be so much with Alois," he said to his wife that night. "Trouble

may come of it hereafter: he is fifteen now, and she is twelve; and the boy is comely of face and form."

"And he is a good lad and a loyal," said the housewife, feasting her eyes on the piece of pine wood where it was throned above the chimney with a cuckoo clock in oak and a Calvary in wax.

"Yea, I do not gainsay that," said the miller, draining his pewter flagon.

"Then, if what you think of were ever to come to pass," said the wife, hesitatingly, "would it matter so much? She will have enough for both, and one cannot be better than happy."

"You are a woman, and therefore a fool," said the miller harshly, striking his pipe on the table. "The lad is naught but a beggar, and, with these painter's fancies, worse than a beggar. Have a care that they are not together in the future, or I will send the child to the surer keeping of the nuns of the Sacred Heart."

The poor mother was terrified, and promised humbly to do his will. Not that she could bring herself altogether to separate the child from her favorite playmate, nor did the miller even desire that extreme of cruelty to a young lad who was guilty of nothing except poverty. But there were many ways in which little Alois was kept away from her chosen companion; and Nello being a boy proud and quiet and sensitive, was quickly wounded, and ceased to turn his own steps and those of Patrasche, as he had been used to do with every moment of leisure, to the old red mill upon the slope. What his offence was he did not know: he supposed he had in some manner angered Baas Cogez by taking the portrait of Alois in the meadow; and when the child who loved him would run to him and nestle her hand in his, he would smile at her very sadly and say with a tender concern for her before himself, "Nay, Alois, do not anger your father. He thinks that I make you idle, dear, and he is not pleased that you should be with me. He is a good man and loves you well: we will not anger him, Alois."

But it was with a sad heart that he said it, and the earth did not look so bright to him as it had used to do when he went out at sunrise under the poplars down the straight roads with Patrasche. The old red mill had been a landmark to him, and he had been used to pause by it, going and coming, for a cheery greeting with its people as her little flaxen head rose above the low mill-wicket, and her little rosy hands had held out a bone or a crust to Patrasche. Now the dog looked wistfully at a closed door, and the boy went on without pausing, with a pang at his heart, and the child sat within with tears dropping slowly on the knitting to which she was set on her little stool by the stove; and Baas Cogez, working among his sacks and his mill-gear, would harden his will and say to himself, "It is best so. The lad is all but a beggar, and full of idle, dreaming fooleries. Who knows what mischief might not come of it in the future?" So he was wise in his generation, and would not have the door unbarred, except upon rare and formal occasions, which seemed to have neither warmth nor mirth in them to the two children, who had been accustomed so long to a daily gleeful, careless, happy interchange of greeting, speech and pastime, with no other watcher of their sports or auditor of their fancies than Patrasche, sagely shaking the brazen bells of his collar and responding with all a dog's swift sympathies to their every change of mood.

All this while the little panel of pine wood remained over the chimney in the mill-kitchen with the cuckoo clock and the waxen Calvary, and sometimes it seemed to Nello a little hard that whilst his gift was accepted he himself should be denied.

But he did not complain: it was his habit to be quiet: old Jehan Daas had said ever to him, "We are poor: we must take what God sends—the ill with the good: the poor cannot choose."

To which the boy had always listened in silence, being reverent of his old grandfather; but nevertheless a certain vague, sweet hope, such as beguiles the

children of genius, had whispered in his heart, "Yet the poor do choose sometimes—choose to be great, so that men cannot say them nay." And he thought so still in his innocence; and one day, when the little Alois, finding him by chance alone amongst the corn-fields by the canal, ran to him and held him close, and sobbed piteously because the morrow would be her saint's day, and for the first time in all her life her parents had failed to bid him to the little supper and romp in the great barns with which her feast-day was always celebrated, Nello had kissed her and murmured to her in firm faith, "It shall be different one day, Alois. One day that little bit of pine wood that your father has of mine shall be worth its weight in silver; and he will not shut the door against me then. Only love me always, dear little Alois, only love me always, and I will be great."

"And if I do not love you?" the pretty child asked, pouting a little through her tears, and moved by the instinctive coquetries of her sex.

Nello's eyes left her face and wandered to the distance, where in the red and gold of the Flemish night the cathedral spire rose. There was a smile on his face so sweet and yet so sad that little Alois was awed by it. "I will be great still," he said under his breath—"great still, or die, Alois."

"You do not love me," said the little spoilt child, pushing him away; but the boy shook his head and smiled, and went on his way through the tall yellow corn, seeing as in a vision some day in a fair future when he should come into that old familiar land and ask Alois of her people, and be not refused or denied, but received in honor, whilst the village folk should throng to look upon him and say in one another's ears, "Dost see him? He is a king among men, for he is a great artist and the world speaks his name; and yet he was only our poor little Nello, who was a beggar, as one may say, and only got his bread by the help of his dog." And he thought how he would fold his grandsire in furs and purples, and portray him as the old man

is portrayed in the Family in the chapel of St. Jacques; and of how he would hang the throat of Patrasche with a collar of gold, and place him on his right hand, and say to the people, "This was once my only friend;" and of how he would build himself a great white marble palace, and make to himself luxuriant gardens of pleasure, on the slope looking outward to where the cathedral spire rose, and not dwell in it himself, but summon to it, as to a home, all men young and poor and friendless, but of the will to do mighty things; and of how he would say to them always, if they sought to bless his name, "Nay, do not thank me—thank Rubens. Without him, what should I have been?" And these dreams, beautiful, impossible, innocent, free of all selfishness, full of heroic worship, were so closely about him as he went that he was happy—happy even on this sad anniversary of Alois' saint's day, when he and Patrasche went home by themselves to the little dark hut and the meal of black bread, whilst in the mill-house all the children of the village sang and laughed, and ate the big round cakes of Dijon and the almond gingerbread of Brabant, and danced in the great barn to the light of the stars and the music of flute and fiddle.

"Never mind, Patrasche," he said, with his arms round the dog's neck as they both sat in the door of the hut, where the sounds of the mirth at the mill came down to them on the night air—"never mind. It shall all be changed by and by."

He believed in the future: Patrasche, of more experience and of more philosophy, thought that the loss of the mill-supper in the present was ill compensated by dreams of milk and honey in some vague hereafter. And Patrasche growled whenever he passed by Baas Cogez.

"This is Alois' name-day, is it not?" said the old man Daas that night from the corner where he was stretched upon his bed of sacking.

The boy gave a gesture of assent: he wished that the old man's memory had erred a little, instead of keeping such sure account.

"And why not there?" his grandfather pursued. "Thou hast never missed a year before, Nello."

"Thou art too sick to leave," murmured the lad, bending his handsome young head over the bed.

"Tut! tut! Mother Nulette would have come and sat with me, as she does scores of times. What is the cause, Nello?" the old man persisted. "Thou surely hast not had ill words with the little one?"

"Nay, grandfather—never," said the boy quickly, with a hot color in his bent face. "Simply and truly, Baas Cogez did not have me asked this year. He has taken some whim against me."

"But thou hast done nothing wrong?"

"That I know—nothing. I took the portrait of Alois on a piece of pine: that is all."

"Ah!" The old man was silent: the truth suggested itself to him with the boy's innocent answer. He was tied to a bed of dried leaves in the corner of a wattle hut, but he had not wholly forgotten what the ways of the world were like.

Hé drew Nello's fair head fondly to his breast with a tenderer gesture. "Thou art very poor, my child," he said with a quiver the more in his aged, trembling voice—"so poor! It is very hard for thee."

"Nay, I am rich," murmured Nello; and in his innocence he thought so—rich with the imperishable powers that are mightier than the might of kings. And he went and stood by the door of the hut in the quiet autumn night, and watched the stars troop by and the tall poplars bend and shiver in the wind. All the casements of the mill-house were lighted, and every now and then the notes of the flute came to him. The tears fell down his cheeks, for he was but a child, yet he smiled, for he said to himself, "In the future!" He stayed there until all was quite still and dark, then he and Patrasche went within and slept together, long and deeply, side by side.

Now he had a secret which only Patrasche knew. There was a little out-

house to the hut, which no one entered but himself—a dreary place, but with abundant clear light from the north. Here he had fashioned himself rudely an easel in rough lumber, and here on a great gray sea of stretched paper he had given shape to one of the innumerable fancies which possessed his brain. No one had ever taught him anything; colors he had no means to buy; he had gone without bread many a time to procure even the few rude vehicles that he had here; and it was only in black or white that he could fashion the things he saw. This great figure which he had drawn here in chalk was only an old man sitting on a fallen tree—only that. He had seen old Michel the woodman sitting so at evening many a time. He had never had a soul to tell him of outline or perspective, of anatomy or of shadow, and yet he had given all the weary, wornout age, all the sad, quiet patience, all the rugged, careworn pathos of his original, and given them so that the old lonely figure was a poem, sitting there, meditative and alone, on the dead tree, with the darkness of the descending night behind him.

It was rude, of course, in a way, and had many faults, no doubt; and yet it was real, true in Nature, true in Art, and very mournful, and in a manner beautiful.

Patrasche had lain quiet countless hours watching its gradual creation after the labor of each day was done, and he knew that Nello had a hope—vain and wild perhaps, but strongly cherished—of sending this great drawing to compete for a prize of two hundred francs a year which it was announced in Antwerp would be open to every lad of talent, scholar or peasant, under eighteen, who would attempt to win it with some unaided work of chalk or pencil. Three of the foremost artists in the town of Rubens were to be the judges and elect the victor according to his merits.

All the spring and summer and autumn Nello had been at work upon this treasure, which, if triumphant, would build him his first step toward independence and the mysteries of the art which he

blindly, ignorantly and yet passionately adored.

He said nothing to any one: his grandfather would not have understood, and little Alois was lost to him. Only to Patrasche he told all, and whispered, "Rubens would give it me, I think, if he knew."

Patrasche thought so too, for he knew that Rubens had loved dogs or he had never painted them with such exquisite fidelity; and men who loved dogs were, as Patrasche knew, always pitiful.

The drawings were to go in on the first day of December, and the decision be given on the twenty-fourth, so that he who should win might rejoice with all his people at the Christmas season.

In the twilight of a bitter wintry day, and with a beating heart, now quick with hope, now faint with fear, Nello placed the great picture on his little green milk-cart, and took it, with the help of Patrasche, into the town, and there left it, as enjoined, at the doors of a public building.

"Perhaps it is worth nothing at all. How can I tell?" he thought, with the heart-sickness of a great timidity. Now that he had left it there, it seemed to him so hazardous, so vain, so foolish, to dream that he, a little lad with bare feet, who barely knew his letters, could do anything at which great painters, real artists, could ever deign to look. Yet he took heart as he went by the cathedral: the lordly form of Rubens seemed to rise from the fog and the darkness, and to loom in its magnificence before him, whilst the lips, with their kindly smile, seemed to him to murmur, "Nay, have courage! It was not by a weak heart and by faint fears that I wrote my name for all time upon Antwerp."

Nello ran home through the cold night, comforted. He had done his best: the rest must be as God willed, he thought, in that innocent, unquestioning faith which had been taught him in the little gray chapel amongst the willows and the poplar trees.

The winter was very sharp already. That night, after they reached the hut, snow fell; and fell for very many days

after that, so that the paths and the divisions in the fields were all obliterated, and all the smaller streams were frozen over, and the cold was intense upon the plains. Then, indeed, it became hard work to go round for the milk while the world was all dark, and carry it through the darkness to the silent town. Hard work, especially for Patrasche, for the passage of the years, that were only bringing Nello a stronger youth, were bringing him old age, and his joints were stiff and his bones ached often. But he would never give up his share of the labor. Nello would fain have spared him and drawn the cart himself, but Patrasche would not allow it. All he would ever permit or accept was the help of a thrust from behind to the truck as it lumbered along through the ice-ruts. Patrasche had lived in harness, and he was proud of it. He suffered a great deal sometimes from frost, and the terrible roads, and the rheumatic pains of his limbs, but he only drew his breath hard and bent his stout neck, and trod onward with steady patience.

"Rest thee at home, Patrasche—it is time thou didst rest—and I can quite well push in the cart by myself," urged Nello many a morning; but Patrasche, who understood him aright, would no more have consented to stay at home than a veteran soldier to shirk when the charge was sounding; and every day he would rise and place himself in his shafts, and plod along over the snow through the fields that his four round feet had left their print upon so many, many years.

"One must never rest till one dies," thought Patrasche; and sometimes it seemed to him that that time of rest for him was not very far off. His sight was less clear than it had been, and it gave him pain to rise after the night's sleep, though he would never lie a moment in his straw when once the bell of the chapel tolling five let him know that the daybreak of labor had begun.

"My poor Patrasche, we shall soon lie quiet together, you and I," said old Jehan Daas, stretching out to stroke the

head of Patrasche with the old withered hand which had always shared with him its one poor crust of bread; and the hearts of the old man and the old dog ached together with one thought: When they were gone who would care for their darling?

One afternoon, as they came back from Antwerp over the snow, which had become hard and smooth as marble over all the Flemish plains, they found dropped in the road a pretty little puppet, a tambourine-player, all scarlet and gold, about six inches high, and, unlike greater personages when Fortune lets them drop, quite unspoiled and unhurt by its fall. It was a pretty toy. Nello tried to find its owner, and, failing, thought that it was just the thing to please Alois.

It was quite night when he passed the mill-house: he knew the little window of her room. It could be no harm, he thought, if he gave her his little piece of treasure-trove, they had been playfellows so long. There was a shed with a sloping roof beneath her casement: he climbed it and tapped softly at the lattice: there was a little light within. The child opened it and looked out, half frightened.

Nello put the tambourine-player into her hands. "Here is a doll I found in the snow, Alois. Take it," he whispered—"take it, and God bless thee, dear!"

He slid down from the shed-roof before she had time to thank him, and ran off through the darkness.

That night there was a fire at the mill. Out-buildings and much corn were destroyed, although the mill itself and the dwelling-house were unharmed. All the village was out in terror, and engines came tearing through the snow from Antwerp. The miller was insured, and would lose nothing: nevertheless, he was in furious wrath, and declared aloud that the fire was due to no accident, but to some foul intent.

Nello, awakened from his sleep, ran to help with the rest: Baas Cogeux thrust him angrily aside. "Thou wert loitering here after dark," he said roughly. "I believe, on my soul, that thou dost know more of the fire than any one."

Nello heard him in silence, stupefied, not supposing that any one could say such things except in jest, and not comprehending how any one could pass a jest at such a time.

Nevertheless, the miller said the brutal thing openly to many of his neighbors in the day that followed; and though no serious charge was ever preferred against the lad, it got bruited about that Nello had been seen in the mill-yard after dark on some unspoken errand, and that he bore Baas Cogez a grudge for forbidding his intercourse with little Alois; and so the hamlet, which followed the sayings of its richest landowner servilely, and whose families all hoped to secure the riches of Alois in some future time for their sons, took the hint to give grave looks and cold words to old Jehan Daas' grandson. No one said anything to him openly, but all the village agreed together to humor the miller's prejudice, and at the cottages and farms where Nello and Patrasche called every morning for the milk for Antwerp, downcast glances and brief phrases replaced to them the broad smiles and cheerful greetings to which they had been always used. No one really credited the miller's absurd suspicion, nor the outrageous accusations born of them, but the people were all very poor and very ignorant, and the one rich man of the place had pronounced against him. Nello, in his innocence and his friendlessness, had no strength to stem the popular tide.

"Thou art very cruel to the lad," the miller's wife dared to say, weeping, to her lord. "Sure he is an innocent lad and a faithful, and would never dream of any such wickedness, however sore his heart might be."

But Baas Cogez being an obstinate man, having once said a thing held to it doggedly, though in his innermost soul he knew well the injustice that he was committing.

Meanwhile, Nello endured the injury done against him with a certain proud patience that disdained to complain: he only gave way a little when he was quite alone with old Patrasche. Besides, he

thought, "If it should win! They will be sorry then, perhaps."

Still, to a boy not quite sixteen, and who had dwelt in one little world all his short life, and in his childhood had been caressed and applauded on all sides, it was a hard trial to have the whole of that little world turn against him for naught. Especially hard in that bleak, snow-bound, famine-stricken winter-time, when the only light and warmth there could be found abode beside the village hearths and in the kindly greetings of neighbors. In the winter-time all drew nearer to each other, all to all, except to Nello and Patrasche, with whom none now would have anything to do, and who were left to fare as they might with the old paralyzed, bedridden man in the little cabin, whose fire was often low, and whose board was often without bread, for there was a buyer from Antwerp who had taken to drive his mule in of a day for the milk of the various dairies, and there were only three or four of the people who had refused his terms of purchase and remained faithful to the little green cart. So that the burden which Patrasche drew had become very light, and the centime-pieces in Nello's pouch had become, alas! very small likewise.

The dog would stop, as usual, at all the familiar gates which were now closed to him, and look up at them with wistful, mute appeal; and it cost the neighbors a pang to shut their doors and their hearts, and let Patrasche draw his cart on again, empty. Nevertheless, they did it, for they desired to please Baas Cogez.

Noël was close at hand.

The weather was very wild and cold. The snow was six feet deep, and the ice was firm enough to bear oxen and men upon it everywhere. At this season the little village was always gay and cheerful. At the poorest dwelling there were possets and cakes, joking and dancing, sugared saints and gilded Jésus. The merry Flemish bells jingled everywhere on the horses; everywhere within doors some well-filled soup-pot sang and smoked over the stove; and everywhere

over the snow without laughing maidens pattered in bright kerchiefs and stout kirtles, going to and from the mass. Only in the little hut it was very dark and very cold.

Nello and Patrasche were left utterly alone, for one night in the week before the Christmas Day, Death entered there, and took away from life for ever old Jehan Daas, who had never known of life aught save its poverty and its pains. He had long been half dead, incapable of any movement except a feeble gesture, and powerless for anything beyond a gentle word; and yet his loss fell on them both with a great horror in it: they mourned him passionately. He had passed away from them in his sleep, and when in the gray dawn they learned their bereavement, unutterable solitude and desolation seemed to close around them. He had long been only a poor, feeble, paralyzed old man, who could not raise a hand in their defence, but he had loved them well: his smile had always welcomed their return. They mourned for him unceasingly, refusing to be comforted, as in the white winter day they followed the deal shell that held his body to the nameless grave by the little gray church. They were his only mourners, these two whom he had left friendless upon earth—the young boy and the old dog.

"Surely, he will relent now and let the poor lad come hither?" thought the miller's wife, glancing at her husband where he smoked by the hearth.

Baas Cogeze knew her thought, but he hardened his heart, and would not unbar his door as the little, humble funeral went by. "The boy is a beggar," he said to himself: "he shall not be about Alois."

The woman dared not say anything aloud, but when the grave was closed and the mourners had gone, she put a wreath of immortelles into Alois' hands and bade her go and lay it reverently on the dark, unmarked mound where the snow was displaced.

Nello and Patrasche went home with broken hearts. But even of that poor, melancholy, cheerless home they were

denied the consolation. There was a month's rent over-due for their little home, and when Nello had paid the last sad service to the dead he had not a coin left. He went and begged grace of the owner of the hut, a cobbler who went every Sunday night to drink his pint of wine and smoke with Baas Cogeze. The cobbler would grant no mercy. He was a harsh, miserly man, and loved money. He claimed in default of his rent every stick and stone, every pot and pan, in the hut, and bade Nello and Patrasche be out of it on the morrow.

Now, the cabin was lowly enough, and in some sense miserable enough, and yet their hearts clove to it with a great affection. They had been so happy there, and in the summer, with its clambering vine and its flowering beans, it was so pretty and bright in the midst of the sun-lighted fields! Their life in it had been full of labor and privation, and yet they had been so well content, so gay of heart, running together to meet the old man's never-failing smile of welcome!

All night long the boy and the dog sat by the fireless hearth in the darkness, drawn close together for warmth and sorrow. Their bodies were insensible to the cold, but their hearts seemed frozen in them.

When the morning broke over the white, chill earth it was the morning of Christmas Eve. With a shudder, Nello clasped close to him his only friend, while his tears fell hot and fast on the dog's frank forehead. "Let us go, Patrasche—dear, dear Patrasche," he murmured. "We will not wait to be kicked out: let us go."

Patrasche had no will but his, and they went sadly, side by side, out from the little place which was so dear to them both, and in which every humble, homely thing was to them precious and beloved. Patrasche drooped his head wearily as he passed by his own green cart: it was no longer his—it had to go with the rest to pay the rent, and his brass harness lay idle and glittering on the snow. The dog could have lain down beside it and died for very heart-sickness as he went, but whilst the lad

lived and needed him Patrasche would not yield and give way.

They took the old accustomed road into Antwerp. The day had yet scarce more than dawned, most of the shutters were still closed, but some of the villagers were about. They took no notice whilst the dog and the boy passed by them. At one door Nello paused and looked wistfully within: his grandfather had done many a kindly turn in neighbor's service to the people who dwelt there.

"Would you give Patrasche a crust?" he said, timidly. "He is old, and he has had nothing since last forenoon."

The woman shut the door hastily, murmuring some vague saying about wheat and rye being very dear that season. The boy and the dog went on again wearily: they asked no more.

By slow and painful ways they reached Antwerp as the chimes tolled ten.

"If I had anything about me I could sell to get him bread!" thought Nello, but he had nothing except the wisp of linen and serge that covered him, and his pair of wooden shoes.

Patrasche understood, and nestled his nose into the lad's hand, as though to pray him not to be disquieted for any woe or want of his.

The winner of the drawing-prize was to be proclaimed at noon, and to the public building where he had left his treasure Nello made his way. On the steps and in the entrance-hall there was a crowd of youths—some of his age, some older, all with parents or relatives or friends. His heart was sick with fear as he went amongst them, holding Patrasche close to him. The great bells of the city clashed out the hour of noon with brazen clamor. The doors of the inner hall were opened; the eager, panting throng rushed in: it was known that the selected picture would be raised above the rest upon a wooden dais.

A mist obscured Nello's sight, his head swam, his limbs almost failed him. When his vision cleared he saw the drawing raised on high: it was not his own! A slow, sonorous voice was proclaiming aloud that victory had been adjudged to Stephan Kiesslinger, born

in the burgh of Antwerp, son of a wharfinger in that town.

When Nello recovered his consciousness he was lying on the stones without, and Patrasche was trying with every art he knew to call him back to life. In the distance a throng of the youths of Antwerp were shouting around their successful comrade, and escorting him with acclamations to his home upon the quay.

The boy staggered to his feet and drew the dog into his embrace. "It is all over, dear Patrasche," he murmured—"all over!"

He rallied himself as best he could, for he was weak from fasting, and retraced his steps to the village. Patrasche paced by his side with his head drooping and his old limbs feeble from hunger and sorrow.

The snow was falling fast: a keen hurricane blew from the north: it was bitter as death on the plains. It took them long to traverse the familiar path, and the bells were sounding four of the clock as they approached the hamlet. Suddenly Patrasche paused, arrested by a scent in the snow, scratched, whined, and draw out with his teeth a small case of brown leather. He held it up to Nello in the darkness. Where they were there stood a little Calvary, and a lamp burned dully under the cross: the boy mechanically turned the case to the light: on it was the name of Baas Cogez, and within it were notes for two thousand francs.

The sight roused the lad a little from his stupor. He thrust it in his shirt, and stroked Patrasche and drew him onward. The dog looked up wistfully in his face.

Nello made straight for the mill-house, and went to the house-door and struck on its panels. The miller's wife opened it weeping, with little Alois clinging close to her skirts. "Is it thee, thou poor lad?" she said kindly through her tears. "Get thee gone ere the Baas see thee. We are in sore trouble to-night. He is out seeking for a power of money that he has let fall riding homeward, and in this snow he never will find it; and God knows it will go nigh to ruin us. It

is Heaven's own judgment for the things we have done to thee."

Nello put the note-case in her hand and called Patrasche within the house. "Patrasche found the money to-night," he said quickly. "Tell Baas Cogez so: I think he will not deny the dog shelter and food in his old age. Keep him from pursuing me, and I pray of you to be good to him."

Ere either woman or dog knew what he meant he had stooped and kissed Patrasche: then closed the door hurriedly, and disappeared in the gloom of the fast-falling night.

The woman and the child stood speechless with joy and fear: Patrasche vainly spent the fury of his anguish against the iron-bound oak of the barred house-door. They did not dare unbar the door and let him forth: they tried all they could to solace him. They brought him sweet cakes and juicy meats; they tempted him with the best they had; they tried to lure him to abide by the warmth of the hearth; but it was of no avail. Patrasche refused to be comforted or to stir from the barred portal.

It was six o'clock when from an opposite entrance the miller at last came, jaded and broken, into his wife's presence. "It is lost for ever," he said with an ashen cheek and a quiver in his stern voice. "We have looked with lanterns everywhere: it is gone—the little maiden's portion and all!"

His wife put the money into his hand, and told him how it had come to her. The strong man sank trembling into a seat and covered his face, ashamed and almost afraid. "I have been cruel to the lad," he muttered at length: "I deserved not to have good at his hands."

Little Alois, taking courage, crept close to her father and nestled against him her fair curly head. "Nello may come here again, father?" she whispered. "He may come to-morrow as he used to do?"

The miller pressed her in his arms: his hard, sun-burned face was very pale and his mouth trembled. "Surely, surely," he answered his child. "He shall bide here on Christmas Day, and any other day he will. God helping me, I

will make amends to the boy—I will make amends."

Little Alois kissed him in gratitude and joy, then slid from his knees and ran to where the dog kept watch by the door. "And to-night I may feast Patrasche?" she cried in a child's thoughtless glee.

Her father bent his head gravely: "Ay, ay: let the dog have the best;" for the stern old man was moved and shaken to his heart's depths.

It was Christmas Eve, and the mill-house was filled with oak logs and squares of turf, with cream and honey, with meat and bread, and the rafters were hung with wreaths of evergreen, and the Calvary and the cuckoo clock looked out from a mass of holly. There were little paper lanterns too for Alois, and toys of various fashions and sweetmeats in bright-pictured papers. There were light and warmth and abundance everywhere, and the child would fain have made the dog a guest honored and feasted.

But Patrasche would neither lie in the warmth nor share in the cheer. Famished he was and very cold, but without Nello he would partake neither of comfort nor food. Against all temptation he was proof, and close against the door he leaned always, watching only for a means of escape.

"He wants the lad," said Baas Cogez. "Good dog! good dog! I will go over to the lad the first thing at day-dawn." For no one but Patrasche knew that Nello had left the hut, and no one but Patrasche divined that Nello had gone to face starvation and misery alone.

The mill-kitchen was very warm; great logs crackled and flamed on the hearth; neighbors came in for a glass of wine and a slice of the fat goose baking for supper. Alois, gleeful and sure of her playmate back on the morrow, bounded and sang and tossed back her yellow hair. Baas Cogez, in the fullness of his heart, smiled on her through moistened eyes, and spoke of the way in which he would befriend her favorite companion; the house-mother sat with calm, contented face at the spinning-wheel; the cuckoo in the clock chirped

mirthful hours. Amidst it all Patrasche was bidden with a thousand words of welcome to tarry there a cherished guest. But neither peace nor plenty could allure him where Nello was not.

When the supper smoked on the board, and the voices were loudest and gladdest, and the Christ-child brought choicest gifts to Alois, Patrasche, watching always an occasion, glided out when the door was unlatched by a careless new-comer, and as swiftly as his weak and tired limbs would bear him sped over the snow in the bitter, black night. He had only one thought—to follow Nello. A human friend might have paused for the pleasant meal, the cheery warmth, the cozy slumber; but that was not the friendship of Patrasche. He remembered a bygone time, when an old man and a little child had found him sick unto death in the wayside ditch.

Snow had fallen freshly all the evening long; it was now nearly ten; the trail of the boy's footsteps was almost obliterated. It took Patrasche long to discover any scent. When at last he found it, it was lost again quickly, and lost and recovered, and again lost and again recovered, a hundred times or more.

The night was very wild. The lamps under the wayside crosses were blown out; the roads were sheets of ice; the impenetrable darkness hid every trace of habitations; there was no living thing abroad. All the cattle were housed, and in all the huts and homesteads men and women rejoiced and feasted. There was only Patrasche out in the cruel cold—old and famished and full of pain, but with the strength and the patience of a great love to sustain him in his search.

The trail of Nello's steps, faint and obscure as it was under the new snow, went straightly along the accustomed tracks into Antwerp. It was past midnight when Patrasche traced it over the boundaries of the town and into the narrow, tortuous, gloomy streets. It was all quite dark in the town, save where some light gleamed ruddily through the crevices of house-shutters, or some group went homeward with lanterns chanting drinking-songs. The streets

were all white with ice: the high walls and roofs loomed black against them. There was scarce a sound save the riot of the winds down the passages as they tossed the creaking signs and shook the tall lamp-irons.

So many passers-by had trodden through and through the snow, so many diverse paths had crossed and recrossed each other, that the dog had a hard task to retain any hold on the track he followed. But he kept on his way, though the cold pierced him to the bone, and the jagged ice cut his feet, and the hunger in his body gnawed like a rat's teeth. He kept on his way, a poor gaunt, shivering thing, and by long patience traced the steps he loved into the very heart of the burgh and up to the steps of the great cathedral.

"He is gone to the things that he loved," thought Patrasche: he could not understand, but he was full of sorrow and of pity for the art-passion that to him was so incomprehensible and yet so sacred.

The portals of the cathedral were unclosed after the midnight mass. Some heedlessness in the custodians, too eager to go home and feast or sleep, or too drowsy to know whether they turned the keys aright, had left one of the doors unlocked. By that accident the footfalls Patrasche sought had passed through into the building, leaving the white marks of snow upon the dark stone floor. By that slender white thread, frozen as it fell, he was guided through the intense silence, through the immensity of the vaulted space—guided straight to the gates of the chancel, and, stretched there upon the stones, he found Nello. He crept up and touched the face of the boy. "Didst thou dream that I should be faithless and forsake thee? I—a dog?" said that mute caress.

The lad raised himself with a low cry and clasped him close. "Let us lie down and die together," he murmured. "Men have no need of us, and we are all alone."

In answer, Patrasche crept closer yet, and laid his head upon the young boy's breast. The great tears stood in his

brown, sad eyes: not for himself—for himself he was happy.

They lay close together in the piercing cold. The blasts that blew over the Flemish dikes from the northern seas were like waves of ice, which froze every living thing they touched. The interior of the immense vault of stone in which they were was even more bitterly chill than the snow-covered plains without. Now and then a bat moved in the shadows—now and then a gleam of light came on the ranks of carven figures. Under the Rubens they lay together quite still, and soothed almost into a dreaming slumber by the numbing narcotic of the cold. Together they dreamed of the old glad days when they had chased each other through the flowering grasses of the summer meadows, or sat hidden in the tall bulrushes by the water's side, watching the boats go seaward in the sun.

Suddenly through the darkness a great white radiance streamed through the vastness of the aisles; the moon, that was at her height, had broken through the clouds, the snow had ceased to fall, the light reflected from the snow without was clear as the light of dawn. It fell through the arches full upon the two pictures above, from which the boy on his entrance had flung back the veil: the Elevation and the Descent of the Cross were for one instant visible.

Nello rose to his feet and stretched his arms to them: the tears of a passionate ecstasy glistened on the paleness of his face. "I have seen them at last!" he cried aloud. "O God, it is enough!"

His limbs failed under him, and he sank upon his knees, still gazing upward at the majesty that he adored. For a few brief moments the light illumined the divine visions that had been denied to him so long—light clear and sweet and strong as though it streamed from the throne of Heaven. Then suddenly it passed away: once more a great darkness covered the face of Christ.

The arms of the boy drew close again the body of the dog. "We shall see His face—*there*," he murmured; "and He will not part us, I think."

On the morrow, by the chancel of the cathedral, the people of Antwerp found them both. They were both dead: the cold of the night had frozen into stillness alike the young life and the old. When the Christmas morning broke and the priests came to the temple, they saw them lying thus on the stones together. Above, the veils were drawn back from the great visions of Rubens, and the fresh rays of the sunrise touched the thorn-crowned head of the Christ.

As the day grew on there came an old, hard-featured man who wept as women weep. "I was cruel to the lad," he muttered, "and now I would have made amends—yea, to the half of my substance—and he should have been to me as a son."

There came also, as the day grew apace, a painter who had fame in the world, and who was liberal of hand and of spirit. "I seek one who should have had the prize yesterday had worth won," he said to the people—"a boy of rare promise and genius. An old wood-cutter on a fallen tree at eventide—that was all his theme. But there was greatness for the future in it. I would fain find him, and take him with me and teach him Art."

And a little child with curling fair hair, sobbing bitterly as she clung to her father's arm, cried aloud, "Oh, Nello, come! We have all ready for thee. The Christ-child's hands are full of gifts, and the old piper will play for us; and the mother says thou shalt stay by the hearth and burn nuts with us all the Noël week long—yes, even to the Feast of the Kings! And Patrasche will be so happy! Oh, Nello, wake and come!"

But the young pale face, turned upward to the light of the great Rubens with a smile upon its mouth, answered them all, "It is too late."

For the sweet, sonorous bells went ringing through the frost, and the sunlight shone upon the plains of snow, and the populace trooped gay and glad through the streets, but Nello and Patrasche no more asked charity at their hands. All they needed now Antwerp gave unbidden.

Death had been more pitiful to them than longer life would have been. It had taken the one in the loyalty of love, and the other in the innocence of faith, from a world which for love has no recompense and for faith no fulfillment.

All their lives they had been together, and in their deaths they were not di-

vided; for when they were found the arms of the boy were folded too closely around the dog to be severed without violence, and the people of their little village, contrite and ashamed, implored a special grace for them, and, making them one grave, laid them to rest there side by side—for ever!





A BRANCH OF LILAC.

PART FIRST.

YES, I shall be shot at dawn. So they say.

All for a branch of lilac. You do not believe? Chut! Men have been shot many a time for as little. A glance, a smile, a tear, a withered flower. So little. And yet so much when they are a woman's. So much. All one's present, all one's past, all one's future.

There is the lilac—look! There is no color, no fragrance, no loveliness in it now. It is so pale, so faded, so scentless. So faded—just like a love that is dead.

People say that men cannot love in these days. It is a lie. Rich men—perhaps not. But the poor!—Then, women do not care for that.

You asked me my story. Why? To have a history is a luxury for the rich. What use can one be to the poor? If they tell it, who listens? And I have been very poor, always. Yet I was happy till that lilac blossomed one fair spring day.

I am a comedian. My mother was one before me. My father—oh, ta-ta-ta! That is another luxury for the wealthy.

My mother was quite obscure always. A little, humble player. She passed with a little wandering troupe, at certain seasons, from town to town, from province to province.

I remember, when I was very small, being carried on her shoulders or about

her waist along the dusty roads, and catching at the butterflies in the sunshine as we went.

I was a little round, brown, mischievous child—very ugly, I am sure, as I am now and have ever been. But to her, no doubt—dear soul!—I had beauty. I must have plagued her sorely, always on the move as she was; but she never made me think myself a nuisance. However tired she might be, she was never too tired to romp and shout and gambol with me. Poor little white, bright, thin-cheeked mother! I see her now, dancing in her spangles with the red paint on, and the bird-like eyes of her always seeking the plump, rough boy who only pulled her dress to pieces when he was hungry, or pommelled her with his sunburnt fists when he was cross and tired. And he was often both tired and hungry: that I remember also. But it was not her fault. Poor little mother! She would have danced her feet to the bone to keep me like a baby prince, if it had been possible for dancing to have brought in wealth.

Poor little mother! She had a heavy fall from some scaffolding when I was five years old; but I can see her now, as though it were yesterday, in her scarlet bodice and her silvered skirts, running off the stage the moment she was free to take me in her arms and cover me with kisses. And, as I remember her, I think she must have been full of

grace—such grace as a bird's is on a bough full of summer leaf; but, if I am right, the people whom she danced for were wrong, for the public never saw anything particular in her, and she died as she had lived—a strolling player to the last.

"Pecielo" was the last word she spoke; Pecielo was the name she always called me; Pecielo I remained. I must have had some other name, of course, that the law gave me. But the law and I were never close friends, and I never asked my debts to it.

The little troupe of comedians whom my mother had been associated with were very good to me. There is so very much goodness in all Bohemians. They are always kindly, generous, sympathetic, compassionate. I was a little motherless, penniless, desolate wretch of five years old; ugly, too—brown and ugly, as you see me now, very much. I have had a face too good for comedy, too good to make the people laugh, for it ever to have been anything except grotesque and unlovely. But they were as good to me as though I had been beautiful to the sight and had inherited a patrimony. The old men and the young, the beldames and the pretty women of the little company, vied with each other in charity and hospitality. True, they were all very poor, but what they had they never grudged to me. They took me with them everywhere, and never even dreamed of turning off the cost and trouble of me upon that bitter step-mother, the state.

As I grew older I took to the stage myself. I could not have imagined life lived to any other music than that of the little shrill reed pipe and deep-rolling drum, that had drowned my first cries at my birth and awakened my laughter so many and many a time later on, that it seemed to me that their cheery sounds were as needful to all sense of existence as was the very light of the sun itself. There were little things that a child could do, little parts that a child could play, and these I had and these I did almost from the time my mother left me alone in

the world. They said I did them well. I do not know about that. I only know that the boards of our little traveling theatre always seemed the natural home to me, and that I was never afraid of the innumerable eyes of the largest audience: they always seemed to me the eyes of friends—of the only friends that I had upon earth. It was so pleasant, too, to make them laugh. I, a little child, a little ugly fellow, whom the children of the towns and villages hooted as I passed up their streets, could hold all these mature men and women, all these fathers of families and grandsires and granddames, shaking and shouting with laughter at the pranks of my mirth and my talent. It was my revenge, and it was sweet to me. Those children who hooted me, who sometimes stoned me, who called me "mountebank," and yelled at me for my ugliness,—they could not make their elders laugh at will. But I could.

I did not bear the children, my foes, any malice. I was what they called good-tempered, and whether I were on or off the stage I was gay at heart almost always at that time, and every other time indeed till that lilac blossomed last year.

It was a merry life we led. Very poor, oh yes, and hard in many ways. We had to tramp in all weathers from place to place, timing ourselves to reach this hamlet or that town by such and such a saint's day or festivity. We had to sleep very often in haylofts or even in cattle-sheds, for usually such taverns as we alone could afford to go to were full to overflowing at any feast-time or market-season. At other periods, too, we did not always make enough to leave anything to be divided amongst ourselves after all expenses of setting up and lighting our little portable playhouse were paid; and old Vico Mathurin, our head and chief, was as honest as the day, and would cheat no man of a sou though he starved for it. But what did that matter? We were a cheerful little fraternity, loving one another, only vying with each other in good-natured rivalry; and

always ready, each of us, to make the best of all chances and all circumstances. We often thought, as we went through the towns, how much happier and freer we were than those were who dwelt in them, bound to one spot, mewed under one roof, seeing one landscape always, looking always to find a grave in the selfsame place where they were born, whilst we went and came as we chose, never tarried long enough in one place to grow weary of it, seldom saw the fruit ripen on the same trees where we saw it blossom, and had nothing between us and the width of the skies. I dare say the townspeople pitied us as homeless vagrants. No doubt. But we never pitied ourselves. So we must have been happy. Wisely or unwisely?

I was but a little creature when I went first on the stage, but I was born a Bohemian, and I was content—more than content, full of joy—as I pattered along by Vico Mathurin's side, my little bare feet deep in the summer dust or splashing into puddles of the autumn rain. Full of joy, for Mathurin would pat me on the head and prophesy wondrous things of my talent; and then pretty, blue-eyed Euphrasie would kiss me and weave the roadside grasses into crowns for me, and big Francisque, her lover, would raise me for a ride on his stout shoulder; and ever and again a lark would sing, or a rabbit would scud across the path, or an old peasant would drop me a handful of mulberries or a clump of honeycomb wrapped in a green leaf; or some other little homely, innocent, simple pleasure would blossom in my way as the country wildflowers sprang up beneath my steps. In the winter, it is true, it was more severe. Winter tries hardly all the wandering races: if the year were all summer, all the world would be Bohemians.

But even in the winter there was so much that was mirthful and pleasant one could not be sad or despondent. Usually in the winter we tarried in some southerly town; and if one were cold, some good creature sitting at her chest-

nut-stall in the street would be sure to thrust some fine ones smoking into my hands with a smile, or pretty Euphrasie would catch me in her arms and warm my cheek upon her beating heart; and then big Francisque would pretend a ferocious jealousy, and take a terrible vengeance by pelting me with gilded gingerbreads from the fairy booths until I cried for quarter, while Vico Mathurin, the gentle, good old man, would, if he had a chance to do so unperceived, slip his share of the frugal meal into my plate, and make believe that some friend at a wineshop had so feasted him at breakfast that he had no appetite nor power left for more. Ah, dear people, dear people! are you with the dead? I wonder. I shall know soon.

So my childhood and boyhood went away very happily. Poverty I did not mind, for it was a poverty so contented and mirthful, and I had never known anything else; and ugliness I did not regret, for they all told me that my physiognomy was the most ductile and expressive for the comic mummeries which were the special vein of my stage-talent. Only now and then, when the little dark-eyed girls of some religious procession with their white lilies and their upraised crosses shrank a little from me under their white clouds of muslin,—only then did I wish that I were straight of feature and comely to the eye, as most lads were.

"It is stupid to be as ugly as that," said one little pretty, fair creature to me once on a confirmation-day, pushing me aside in the street on to the sharp-set stones of the roadway. I stumbled and I winced, she was so fair and angel-like. But that night she came, my little angel, still with her white rosebuds on her yellow curls, to the theatre which we had set up in the market-place—came with her parents, who were rich tanners in the town. I saw her; I saw nothing but her: she laughed, she cried, she applauded: she was scarlet with wonder, beside herself with glee. They told me—Mathurin and Francisque, my teachers and masters—that I had never played so well, so wonderfully for my

years, as I played that night. I laughed as I heard them, an hysterical, choking laugh, I remember, not seeing them, only seeing in the sea of faces one little golden head crowned with white rosebuds.

"Ask her *now* if it be stupid to be ugly," I said to them: then I fainted.

You do not care to hear all this. What does it matter? Whether I suffered or enjoyed, loved or hated, is of no consequence to any one. The dancing-dog suffers intensely beneath the scourge of the stick, and is capable of intense attachment to any one who is merciful enough not to beat him; but the dancing-dog and his woe and his love are nothing to the world: I was as little.

There is nothing more terrible, nothing more cruel, than the waste of emotion, the profuse expenditure of fruitless pain, which every hour, every moment, as it passes, causes to millions of living creatures. If it were of any use who would mind? But it is all waste, frightful waste, to no end, to no end.

I wander: I cannot help it. I must tell of myself in my own way, or not at all. Thus I grew up with these gay, kindly, tender-souled people, who were outcasts in the sight of most men. When I was about fifteen years of age the old man died—died of cold, I believe. He gave his little *scaldino* and his one thick cloak to warm the feet of a poor young creature who had hardly recovered from child-birth, and who lay shivering on a bed of straw in a wayside hut: and having done this, saying nothing to any one, he lay shivering all night in his garret in a bitter frost, till his heart ceased its slow, gentle beating for ever. His loss broke up the little troop. Its members held loosely together for a while, but the keystone which had united the whole had fallen when Mathurin died, and the several pieces of the little structure dropped asunder one by one. Francisque and Euphrasie bethought themselves late in the day of getting the sanction of priests on their love, and wedded one another

and went somewhere southward, I forget whither, and together opened a café and flower-shop, thinking it time to get a roof over their heads and a place in the reputable world as middle age crept upon them. The others all went right and left, east and west, as they would. I went first with some, then with others. Euphrasie would have had me go to live with them and help plant her flower seeds and bind up her carnations, but I would not leave the old ways of the old life. A roof?—what could that matter to me, young and strong and gifted with one talent, as all people said? Besides, I had been born a Bohemian: the wanderer's, the stroller's blood was in me strong and ardent. I loved the freedom and the change—ay, I loved the very risks and deprivations—of the career I had always followed, and I was resolved that there should never be any music sweeter in my ear than the sounds of the old reed pipe and the brazen drum which had greeted my young senses in my cradle. I was eighteen: I was full of health and strength. I had a talent that at least was good for this—to make the people laugh. I do not need to say I had no fear of the future: I loved the career of a comedian, and I would not have exchanged its gayety and carelessness and freedom for anything—nay, not for an empire.

My early instructor, Mathurin, although he had remained an obscure stroller to the last, had been a man of accurate judgment and of genuine taste. He had reared me to discern the difference between a graceful fooling and a witless buffoonery: he had taught me to aim always at raising the pure mirth and the happy glee of the populace by legitimate means, and not by the vile medium of obscene jests and of lascivious side-play. I was a comic actor, as he had been: yes, but this I can say, as he did before me—that never by me were the people the worse for the laughter I raised. What does that matter, either? you say. Not much to any one; only, when one is to die at break of day, it is not unpleasant to remember that no girl's mind was the baser, no

man's impulses were the lewder, for the way one has followed one's art.

I joined various troops of wandering players after the old band broke up at Mathurin's death. I was successful, in my way, with the people. I never attracted notice enough to be called to any city or sought by any impresario. I do not think I was ever coarse enough for the famous theatres. Nay, I speak in sober earnest, not in any irony. The taste of cities requires indecent gesture, and sees no point in a jest unless it have some foul meaning hidden in its *équivoque*. Now, my fooling was cleanly and honest in its mirth—simple, I dare say, but, as far as I could make it, harmless. When the tired hordes of the laboring classes and the stupid, open-mouthed peasantry crammed the wooden booth to overflowing, and laughed at me till they lifted the canvas roofing with the loud gusts of their expanding lungs, they were never the worse for that momentary oblivion of their hunger and travail—never, that I know.

So I spent my life for ten years—spent it till that lilac bloomed. Oh, do not think I was a saint. I had plenty of follies, plenty of sins. I loved a draught of wine, a fling at dominoes, a kiss of ripe lips, a dance with limber limbs: I loved all these as well as any man, and had my share of them. But what I would say is, that in my art I always tried to do good. Vico Mathurin had always led me to see that any career may be ennobled by the leading of it, and he had always held that though the world may rate it low, the art of the comic player may have a noble aim if it aspire ever to make the weary and overtasked multitude forget for a little season the gall of heavy harness and the toil of flinty roads.

"See you here," he would say to me many a time when I was a boy. "These people come and look at us and hearken to us, and laugh and are glad for a little space: then, when they go back into their cabins or their attics, some little trill of our song will stay on their famished lips, some little bubble of laughter at the memory of one of our jokes will

remain with them amidst their poverty and their hard work; and these will be like a stray sunbeam in a cellar in the darkness of their lot. Think of that, think of that, Peciolo, and it will not hurt you when any scoffer casts at you, as a term of scorn, your title of strolling player."

And these words of my dear old master abode with me always, and as far as I could I trod closely in his footsteps; and in many places where he had been known the people welcomed me and loved me a little for his sake.

I never left France: we who speak only to the populace cannot go where the populace have another tongue than ours. But France is so wide, and I was for ever on the move—in the north for the harvest, in the centre for the vintage, in the south for the winter season; going whithersoever there was a festival or a bridal or a great market, or a holiday of any sort that made the townsfolk or the villagers in festal trim and in the mood to smile.

Where I sit in the gloom here I see all the scenes of that pleasant life pass like pictures before me. No doubt I was often hot, often cold, often footsore, often ahungered and athirst: no doubt; but all that has faded now. I only see old, lost, unforgotten brightness; the sunny roads, with the wild poppies blowing in the wayside grass; the quaint little red roofs and peaked towers that were thrust upward out of the rolling woods; the clear blue skies, with the larks singing against the sun; the quiet, cool, moss-grown towns, with old dreamy bells ringing sleepily above them; the dull casements opening here and there to show a rose like a girl's cheek, and a girl's face like the rose; the little wineshops buried in their climbing vines and their tall, many-colored hollyhocks, from which sometimes a cheery voice would cry, "Come, stay for a stoup of wine, and pay us with a song." Then the nights when the people flocked to us, and the little tent was lighted, and the women's and the children's mirth rang out in peals of music; and the men vied with each

other as to which should bear each of us off to have bed and board under the cottage roof, or in the old mill-house, or in the weaver's garret; the nights when the homely supper-board was brightened and thought honored by our presence; when one told the black-eyed daughter's fortunes, and kept the children round-eyed and flushing red with wonder at strange tales, and smoked within the leaf-hung window with the father and his sons; and then went out, quietly, alone in the moonlight, and saw the old cathedral white and black in the shadows and the light; and strayed a little into its dim aisles, and watched the thorn-crowned God upon the cross, and in the cool, fruit-scented air, in the sweet silent dusk, moved softly with noiseless footfall and bent head, as though the dead were there. Ah, well! they are all gone, those days and nights. Begrudge me not their memory. I am ugly, and very poor, and of no account; and I die at sunrise, so they say. Let me remember whilst I can: it is all oblivion *there*. So they say.

I led this life for ten years after the death of Vico Mathurin—led it happily, yes, very happily in the main, although at no time in it did I ever make money enough to pay for more than the simplest fare, the hardest couch, the thinnest draught of wine.

But happiness depends so much upon one's self. That is a threadbare saying of the preachers. Yes, I know. But it is true, for all that. So long as one has no regret, one can be happy; and as for me, I envied no man. This was ignorance, no doubt. If I had ever known what wealth and its powers and its pleasures were like, no doubt I should have hungered for them like the rest of men. But I had never known, and it was not in my nature merely to be jealous of possession. If I had been crippled, I should have passionately envied those who still walked at will straightly and swiftly whither they would. But it was not in me, whilst I could march as I pleased, strongly and fast, through the seeding grasses, over the sun-swept plains, amongst the red and gold leaves

of autumn, and over the white fields of the midwinter snows,—it was not in me then, I say, to envy the men who rolled on wheels or were borne by horses. It was not in me: it would have seemed to me peevish, childish, ingrate, mean. This was my ignorance, no doubt. Men, I have noticed, knowing much, do envy much—almost always.

One day in the early spring-time I came with my troop into a little town that stood on the Loire River—a little old, gray town, high on a rock, circled by crumbling walls, all blossoming everywhere just then with bud and leaf, all over its moat and its ramparts, in its streets and its casements: its very ditches were white with lilies-of-the-valley, and its very roofs were yellow with flowering houseleeks, while at every nook and corner over the walls of its gardens the lilacs, white and purple, were in bloom. I can smell them now: in the ditch that they will bury me in, I shall smell them still, I think.

We entered the gates at high noon, and set up our play-house in the market-square. The morrow would be a fête-day, and the town was stirred from the gray torpor and stillness of its extreme old age, and was alive and gay with country-people and its own small population, all afoot and thronging the wooden stalls of the fair and the crooked, steep alleys that crossed and recrossed each other up the slope of the place.

As I went up one of these, bearing my share of the framework and the canvas of our play-house, with the reed pipe and the old drum sounding merrily as ever before our tired steps, I heard a voice above me, the clear, high voice of a woman. "How ugly he is, that one!" it cried with a laugh. "His face alone is a burlesque. He will make the very dogs in the streets die of laughter."

"Hush!" said a voice that was lower in tone and fuller. "Who knows? He may hear. And he looks so weary and so tired!"

The other voice laughed in its cruel, saucy glee: "Pooh! He is too ugly to live! Why does God make such creatures?"

And across the eyes the fragrance of lilac in full blossom struck me a cool, refreshing blow. She who spoke last had broken a branch of the sweet spring flower and cast it down to me in merry scorn, so that it fell across the timber on which my hands were clasped. There was a little saffron-hued butterfly upon it, I remember, and one golden-brown bee. The bee paused a moment upon my wrist and then flew from me: the butterfly remained upon the blossoms. I looked up. An old man, a gardener, who had chidden her and the bright creature who had thrown the sweet blossom and the harsh words at me, leaned over the old gray, moss-grown wall. The lilac boughs were all about her—above, beneath, around. Her golden head glistened in the sunlight. She had a knot of lilacs in her breast. Can I describe her? No: think of the woman who to you, above all others of her sex, has meant love. She was but a young girl of the people, the daughter of a poor wood-carver, simply clad in the garb of her province, spending a momentary rest from her daily labor in leaning over the old garden wall to watch the strange strollers pass by with pipe and beat of drum; but to me she became the world.

It is so strange! We see a million faces, we hear a million voices, we meet a million women with flowers in their breasts and light in their fair eyes, and they do not touch us. Then we see one, and she holds for us life or death, and plays with them idly so often—as idly as a child with toys. She is not nobler, better or more beautiful than were all those we passed, and yet the world is empty to us without her.

I went on up the street. I held the bough of lilac in my hand. Yes: this bough, poor faded, scentless thing! And that morning it was so bright, so full of odor, so eagerly kissed by the butterfly and the bee. A year ago, just a year ago! Are the lilacs in flower there, I wonder, now? Surely; and she gathers them and throws them to her lover. Why not?

Shall she think of the bough that is

dead—of the bough that blossomed last season—so long ago, so long ago? No. The lilac flowers live but a day. But that brief day is longer than a woman's memory, I think.

I went on up the street.

That night!—how I played I cannot tell. I did not know what I did. All about me was the smell of the lilac trees, and in the sea of faces below I looked only for hers. She was not there.

When the stage wanted me no longer, and the audience had flocked out, loud in eager praise of us, I shook myself free of all my comrades and of the hearty townsfolk, and went back to that little steep street full of the smell of the lilacs.

There was a clear, full moon. The lilacs were all colorless in it, and their scent was heavy on the wind. Some rill of water within the garden walls was falling with musical, even measure. An owl flew by me with swift white wing gleaming silver-bright in the lustre of the stars. Why do I speak of these things? They are nothing now. And yet they are with me always.

I walked there to and fro all night. At sunrise I went away ashamed.

What was a bough of lilac to make me a fool, thus?

At daybreak I asked a stone-cutter, as he went by me to his work, who dwelt behind those old crumbling walls. He told me no one. They were the walls of an old monastic garden, into which any one might stray at pleasure. I asked him no more. I felt a strange silence and shyness upon me.

I went home to the little miserable tavern where my people had found lodging, and went up to my garret there, and looked at the lilac bough, and bent my head and kissed it foolishly. I felt as though it were my fate in some way. I had placed it in water, and kept it in the shade, but already it had withered, and the yellow butterfly was dead. All that day through I endeavored to find the woman who had dropped it into my hands, but I had no success. It was a festal day, and the

streets were full of people, bright with bannets and streamers, crucifixes and images, white-robed singing-boys and gay little children with their heads crowned with spring flowers. But I did not light, amongst all the faces, on the face for which I sought. She must have been there, but in some way or other she had escaped me.

Night came, and I went again upon the stage. I was still incessantly pursued by one image. "What are you looking for, Peciolo?" my companions asked me. I laughed stupidly, and answered them, "A bough of lilac." They stared, and thought me out of my wits, for all over the town, in the little gardens and in the shrubberies on the ramparts, and against the old stone gateways, the lilacs, white and purple, were in bloom, and amongst their tender green leafage the mated birds were nestling.

I went on the boards as usual. I remember well the little piece we performed that evening. It was a very simple little scene of humor, wherein I played the chief part—a part which always suited me—a poor cobbler, who, old and ugly and crippled, loves a young girl of his village, and is the butt and laughing-stock of all the village youth for his misplaced and despised passion. The part was a very droll one, and I was always accustomed to play it amidst shrieks of laughter from my audiences at the follies and presumptions of the old, crippled, ugly, withered shoemaker, who had dared to lift his eyes and his thoughts to the loveliest and most mischievous maiden in his village.

This night, however, I played it in a different spirit. The sounds of those words, "How ugly he is!" were ringing in my ears, and my brain was giddy with them. They shouted me a vociferous welcome when I appeared. I was popular in the place, and the piece was popular likewise. The presumption of emotion in any creature unlovely and aged has always been a favorite theme with the populace for gibes and mockery. It must seem very ridiculous, no doubt. And yet it is not the young,

not the handsome, who feel most. This night I played the part differently. I did not know what possessed me. It had been a comic part always: I had always been a comic actor. Neither in the part nor in me had ever any one seen on the stage aught except farcical drolleries, absurd situations, ludicrous aspects. And yet that night suddenly I changed, and the part with me, and I was powerless to help it. I was compelled by an impulse stronger than myself to transform the character into something higher, nobler, infinitely sadder than the poor old fool whom it had been my amusement to portray and theirs to applaud. I cannot tell how it was. I changed no action, altered no single word, and yet the part I played ceased to be contemptible, farcical, absurd: it became full of pathos, dignity almost—I might say, of heroism. That poor old, feeble, ill-favored, poverty-stricken man, he had a heart that could love infinitely and infinitely despair—a heart which knew itself deeper and truer and keener in loyalty and suffering than any heart that beat around him with the joyous, vain throbs of an exultant youth, and yet which only made him the standing jest of all his little world, the jeered-at dotard mocked by the gay lips of the very creature for whom he would have died a thousand deaths.

That was how I read the character now: this was how I played it; and when my last words were spoken, I, looking for the first time that night on the crowd before me, saw that they were breathless, tremulous, very still—saw that I, their paid buffoon, their hired jester, had not made them laugh, but made them weep. They did not know what ailed them, but by that strange tie which unites the actor with his audience, the vague and bitter pain in me communicated itself to them, and they wept where they had mocked, they sorrowed where they had scoffed.

"What possessed you, Peciolo?" my comrades said to me, clustering around when the piece was over. "Who could have thought you had it in you? A

part like that, too! Why the people cried like children — all of them, old and young. What could possess you, eh?"

I laughed foolishly again, I know, for my own throat was husky and my own eyes were dim.

"It is all the fault of a branch of lilac," I muttered to them, laughing off my folly. They must have thought me mad, I suppose: I thought myself so.

My chief came and stared at me curiously, then struck me a kindly blow upon the shoulders.

"*Peste*, Peciolo!" he swore with a good-humored oath of wonder, "you will be a tragic actor, after all, I should not be surprised. But another time do not make my whole house cry like women when we advertise a comic entertainment. Our trade is to make folk laugh: do not forget that, my friend, again."

I was silent. I could not offer any explanation of what had so strangely and so unwontedly moved me.

It had all come of a branch of lilac. But then who would believe that? People never will believe what is true.

Well, it appeared later on that, although the impressario of our troupe of jesters had feared the anger of the audience for being mournful when we had promised to be gay, he had feared it needlessly. This little piece, which my change of mood had changed from farce to poetry, pleased them none the less in its altered aspect. They knew me well, had known me when I was a little round, sunburnt child; and it was wonderful to these simple people that their odd, ugly old friend Peciolo should have any such powers in him.

"We knew he could always make us laugh, but he makes us weep too, the droll one! Who knows? He may be great one day. He may even go to Paris," they said to one another as they left the theatre. And they clustered round me and embraced me, and pressed me to go drink and smoke with them; but seeing that I was silent and in no mood for boisterous company, forbore to solicit me, and went away shak-

ing their heads sadly, and yet proudly withal; for I was their old friend Peciolo: their graybeards had given me pears and peaches when I was a little lad; their elders had all seen me toddle by my poor mother's side, holding on to her spangled skirts; and now I had genius, their wisecracks said, and genius was something very vague in their minds, very audacious, very terrible — an honor and yet a plague.

The next time we were to play that piece I would fain have had it changed and have gone back to my old fooling; but I was not master of the troupe, and the townspeople, it seemed, clamored for me, Peciolo, to play the part a second time with that new talent which time or chance, as they thought, had developed in me. So we played it. Genius can do as it likes with its world, but we poor folk, who had only a little trifle of talent, for which we could not always even find any market at all, — we could only obey our little shred of the public obediently and give it what it asked. That night, when I went on the stage, I felt that she was there before I saw her — there amidst the populace, with that bright golden head of hers rising out from the sea of the swarthy peasant faces, and the sweet, saucy child's eyes laughing upon me across the yellow, smoky flicker of the dull oil lamps.

I saw her: I stammered, I stumbled, I felt blind and dizzy. My comrades playing with me hissed sharply in my ear, "What ails thee, Peciolo? Art mad, or drunk, or ill, or what?" They did not rouse me. I stood staring dully across the little play-house.

The people grew angry at the pause and at the silence. Their favor was my daily bread: their wrath would be my ruin. Yet they did not stir me. I did not see them: I only saw the face that had laughed on me from the lilacs.

Across the rising uproar in the tent there came to me a small, soft, silvery sound. It was the sound of her voice, and it murmured with a cruel glee,

"So ugly and so stupid, too! That is surely too much in one creature!"

And then she laughed again, the pretty, babyish, mutinous laugh with which she had tossed me the lilac bough. That one sound roused me, like a thorn thrust in an open wound. I rallied; I forced myself into the part I played; I knew little, nothing, all the time, of where I was or of what I did, and the audience was gone to me: I only saw one face. But to that one I played with all the soul that was in me; and they told me that I eclipsed myself—that I held the people breathless and almost afraid. That, from my own knowledge, I cannot say, of course. I only know that they shouted for me, at the end, again and again; that in their rude fashion they did me all the homage that they could; that they waved their kerchiefs and their caps at me; that they screamed their vivas at me until their lungs were weary; and that they clutched at me with a hundred eager hands to lead me out amidst them to the noisy honors of the tavern. But I shook myself free of them—churlishly, I fear—upon some plea of sickness, and got out alone, and hid myself and watched the women depart from the wooden booth of the playhouse. But I was too late. My kindly tormentors had robbed me of the only recompense I cared for. She was gone, and I could not tell whether or no I had gained my triumph there—whether or no the sunny, cruel eyes had moistened into tears as the eyes of all the other women had done that night. I went away sick at heart, despite that victory on which my old companions so generously felicitated me. A victory over these poor boors who knew not one letter from another! What was it worth? In the great cities no doubt they would have hissed down my acting. For the first time, my career seemed miserable, and any successes in it seemed ridiculous either to seek or to prize. For, in imagination, I followed the bright creature to her home, and saw her unloose her thick light hair before her mirror, and heard her laugh in her solitude as she thought of me, an ugly wretch who thought, if ploughmen laughed at him or kitchen-wenchs wept, that he had fame!

For the first time since I had awakened in my poor mother's arms to the summons of the pipe and the drum, the life I had led seemed vile to me—foolish and wretched, and of no result.

As I went home in the darkness, her laughter seemed all about me—in the leaves, in the fountains, in the little low winds, in the tremulous singing of the grass-hidden insects. All of them seemed to laugh at me with her laughter, and shout in chorus with all their tiny, tender voices, in a derision the more cruel because coming from things so slight and fair: "So ugly, and so stupid too! Why does God make such creatures?" Ah, why indeed? Often have I asked that also.

My story is nothing new, you see. It is such a common one. I was a fool.

That night my chief followed me up into the garret where I slept, and told me that he would give me some increase of payment, and that he thought that we might tarry full a month in this small town, I was so popular with the people, and the district was in a manner rich: its tanners, its vine-dressers, its husbandmen, were well to do, and, for our country, it was populous, and from the many hamlets round there would be most likely audiences for us all the summer season through.

I did not question his judgment. I caught eagerly at his will to stay. For me, I knew the whole earth now only held one road worth the treading—the road where the lilacs blossomed. Well, we stayed on till the lilacs faded, as he had said, and long ere the month was out I had found her name and her dwelling. I don't care to say her name: let it die with me. After I saw her that first day it was always "She" in my thoughts. The world held for me only one woman.

She lived in a high old house, in a gray, dusky street, in the topmost corner of it, close against the sky. The old garden was near, and she went thither often. She had no friends. She got her bread by making lace. She sat at her lattice with her golden hair bound up in the gold-colored kerchief, with

her small rosy hands flying in and out among the bobbins, and the senseless pillow close pressed against the white warmth of her breast. I have often watched her so, hidden myself in some old dark doorway or some crumbling arch opposite and far below. And all the time the lilacs were in blossom. She always had a great sweet cluster of them set in a brown broken jar upon the stone sill of her window. And whilst I watched there below the winds would shake some breath of their fragrance out to me, and the little blue butterflies would fly to and fro betwixt me and the lattice; and, like a fool, I would tell myself that she would hardly, sure, have flung me a bough of her favorite flower if she had thought me so utterly hideous and ridiculous as her words had said. I was very shy and silent. I had been bold enough in my day. I had never cared what audacious jest I passed, what careless impudence I attempted, with any woman. My very knowledge of how absolutely I, poor and ill-favored, was nothing to all their sex, had made me reckless and dauntless in my ways with them. Such kisses as I had ever tasted had all been bought, such lips as had smiled on me had only smiled because even my poor guerdon was the only thing which stood between them and starvation; and although my memory of my mother had kept me less vicious than my mode of life might have made me, yet I had never been over-modest where female creatures were in question. But her— I did not know what ailed me, I was so timid, so dumb-stricken, so unlike what I had ever been.

Partly, no doubt, it was the knowledge of her scorn that silenced me. But chiefly it was that she had been to me, from the first instant I had seen her, a creature inexpressibly beautiful and full of sanctity, as far above me as though she had been a sovereign in her palace and amidst her guards, instead of a girl of the populace weaving lace at her casement in an attic.

All her people were dead. She was

sixteen years old, and she was poor. So much I learned. I had not courage to speak her name, or to ask much of her. I fancied every one must see the blood coming and going in my foolish face if I but spoke of her by chance to any neighbor. One old woman, who had a fruit-stall in the street, shrugged her shoulders and thrust out her mouth and muttered some evil words against her, and would have told me something, I remember now, one day. But I knew what the venom of women was: I would not hear, I could not bear to look, to play the spy on her. Otherwise, perhaps— But it was not to be. Men when they stumble to their fate are blind and deaf: it is the will of God.

She seemed to me to live quite innocently and most simply, for she, too, was very poor. Poverty for myself I had never esteemed as any sort of ill: I thought that in it men were healthy, strong, untempted and most manlike. But it made my heart ache to watch that little bare chamber which was all her home. She was so infinitely lovely, so golden bright, so rose-like, so dainty in hue and shape, that it seemed to me she ought to be housed as graciously as a butterfly in a lily-cup, as a little blue warbler in a summer nest of leaves.

She soon espied me where I kept my vigil. She would laugh a little and glance at me with her sweet mischievous eyes, and now and then would nod her head with some charming little gesture, half of invitation, half of derision and disdain. And yet she was coy too. She would take her way to mass in early morning with a string of red dried berries round her throat for rosary, and would go counting them with her white lids and her long dark eyelashes cast downward, nor look to right or left of her, seeming ever absorbed in earnest prayer.

God in heaven! who teaches women? This one had not fully spent her seventeenth year; she had been the child of poor laboring people, her father a hewer of wood, her mother a weaver of lace; she had seen naught of any world except this little one of the gray, quiet old

town set on the river-rock; and yet who could have taught her any wile which she had not by nature of her sex's science? No one—not even him by whom the mother of Cain was tempted, as priests say. It is strange—strange and most terrible. And still I think they know not what they do. They are subtle for very play; they are cruel for mere sport; they devour what loves them by their simple instinct, as the young kitten dallies with its mouse.

Others have said this all much better than I say it? Oh yes, no doubt—only to every man, when he suffers, it seems new, and he thinks no wound was ever yet so deep, or dealt in such utter wantonness, as his has been.

Well, we tarried in that place until all the blossoms of the lilacs had died off, and above the low stone walls, and between the gables of the streets, and in the gardens slanting to the water's edge, there flowered in their stead the tall silver lilies and the radiant roses of the summer-time. My lilac bough was withered and colorless as dust, but in its stead there budded for me the wonder-flower of a supreme happiness. She came oftentimes to our play-house with some of the townspeople, and I thought, or cheated myself into thinking, that after she had seen me act she grew to despise me less. The nights she was not there I played ill, very ill, I know: our chief rated me gravely many a time. But when she was there, though I saw nothing of any audience, save only the bright ring of her hair in the lamplight, that glistened like the nimbus about the heads of saints, I know that I performed my part with a fire and a soul in me which were wholly inspired by her.

"If he were not so uncertain he would be an artist fit even for Paris," I heard the folk say round me; and my old chief said so likewise. I laughed to myself and felt heartsick: it was horrible to have one's skill, one's brain, one's strength, one's life, all ruled by the presence or absence of one human creature.

And yet so it was. If I could make

her mouth part with mirth or fill her eyes with wondering concern at the humor or the pathos of my representation, I became for the time a great artist. If she were not before me, the whole place was empty: I was dull, lifeless, stupid, and I dragged my limbs with effort through the allotted part until the play was over.

But she was often there. In common with the other players, I had a right to admit some one when I would to the theatre free, and every morning she found a pass upon her little deal table, with some simple gift of flowers or fruit or other trifles, such as I could afford to get with the poor pittance which was all to which my share in the profits of our representations ever amounted.

She took all I offered, and I was more than repaid whenever she gave me in return a saucy nod, a sunny smile. Sometimes she would deny me these, and pass me by with a little shudder of aversion, or affect not even to see me standing in her path. I could not resent it; I had no title; I knew full well she thought me too grotesque and ugly for any female thing to smile on twice in the same day. I was content if she would let me follow her without rebuke, or gaze at her without her putting her hands before her eyes, as though to screen them from some sight repulsive to her. For this she did often, and then would laugh with sauciest merriment at my misery, so that I never rightly knew whether she hated me or no.

Until one day. It had been very warm. There was no wind to cool the air. The yellow sun scorched that old dark, cool street into an amber glare, and turned the dusky, sombre shadows to a russet gold. The little sad, caged birds opened their bills thirstily and gasped. The red carnations in the window embrasures drooped sadly, and the dogs crept faint and fevered into the shelter of every jutting doorway or projecting gallery of the ancient houses. Between the roofs shone the blue, cloudless sky. I can see the quiver of the white, dusty trees against it. I can hear

the slow, indolent murmur of the unseen river far below. I can smell the sickly, heavy odor of the parched lilies in the heat. All the blinds and shutters were closed. No one was astir. The whole place seemed to sleep.

I only was awake and out—I only, who felt neither heat nor cold, knew neither day nor night, but only looked up at that one little casement in the roof to see the sunbeams illumine a girl's hand passing amidst the threads, or to watch the moonbeams slanting in their purity upon the dark, closed lattice where she slept. I was out in the burning noontide, pacing to and fro on the stony way, lest by any chance she might be there, at the window, at her work. Long I stayed in vain, moving up and down in the shadowless heat on the other side of the street, as my custom was. The garret window was empty, and the flowers in it, my flowers, were dead. I had others in my hand, screened with wet leaves from the searching sun-rays. I waited for her to come to the lattice ere I should lay them down, as my wont was, in the entrance, upon the basin scooped above the bench in the stone wall to hold the holy water.

But instead of leaning above there, high up against the heavens, she came toward me—came down the street, drooping in the heat as the roses drooped.

She had been out with some lace to the market-square. She and I were all alone, facing one another suddenly in the silent, sultry, sleepy noon beneath the eaves of the old houses. She had a kirtle of green, I remember, and a bodice of white; and she had sheltered her bright hair and her little yellow kerchief with some broad woven green leaves. She looked herself like a flower blossoming out from the gray, wrinkled square stones of the pavement.

It might be the heat, it might be her fatigue, it might be—I know not. Her face was paler than its wont, and her eyes were softer. I cannot tell what it was: something gave me voice and I spoke—spoke as I gave her my poor little gift.

I knew how foolish it was: I knew how mad it was. I knew no woman could ever look on me with any sentiment perhaps except disgust—with nothing more than pity, at the most. I knew a man's heart might break for ever and no creature see aught except a jest in his despair if he were vilely-featured and poor of habit and estate, as I was. And yet I spoke, borne out of myself and swept away upon a flood of words, irresistibly, senselessly, I know not how, as some impulse would impel me on the stage sometimes, so that in the torrent of my speech the hearers would be carried away, and forget that he who moved them was but an ugly, poor and nameless comic player. I could not hope to move her thus, and yet I spoke. It would end all, I thought. I must do so, I knew. And yet I spoke in the old dim, quiet street, with no listeners anywhere except the dusky carnations drooping in the heat. What I said I cannot tell, but I prayed to her as men should only pray to their God, they say. I did not ask her for any love in answer: I might as soon have dreamed of asking for the sun in heaven. But I begged for a little pity, for a little patience: it was a crime, I knew, for any creature ugly and poor as I to speak of love at all to any woman.

When my heart had spent itself and my voice had died on my parched, dry lips, I grew cold with deadly fear. I listened for her laughter, her cruel, sweet, merciless, childlike, mocking laughter.

Instead, she was quite silent. Then suddenly she trembled and grew pale, and was so still—so still. I heard the loud, heavy beating of my own heart in the silence: that was all the sound there was. Suddenly she looked at me, and her mouth quivered, and she drew her breath with a little low, quick sob.

"I am all alone," she murmured, half with laughter, half with tears—"I am all alone!"

What could I think? I was so ugly, so grotesque, so poor, so utterly deserted by all fortune; and yet the gray street, the yellow light, the red carnations nodding at the window, the hard

blue sky, with the white, thirsty leaves painted on it, all went round with me in a blind, sickly whirl. It was impossible! and yet she looked at me and laughed a little, with her own old, sweet scorn at my madness, though her tears were falling. "Yes, do you hear?" she said low in her throat, so softly and yet with such a pretty petulance. "Do you hear? You are so ugly, so absurd: you have a mouth like a frog and eyes like a fish, and yet you are good,—you can say beautiful things, and—I am all alone!"

And then I knew her meaning. Ah, God! If only I could have died that day, when heaven itself seemed open to me!

Was it all a lie, then? I often wonder. Nay, not all, I think. Perhaps not any of it. She was very young, and she was very poor, and she was weary of her life; and even such a one as I was welcome to her, since I loved her with such utter passion, and could give her freedom, as she thought. Nay, I would not think it a lie—then.

She never loved me. But she knew that I loved her; and perhaps the woe of my words had moved her to compassion; and perhaps she thought, "Better go with this poor fool, and roam the world, and be a little glad, than waste all my fair years in loneliness, losing my sight over the cobwebs of laces that I only weave for other women's wear." Perhaps, too, she had heard the people say that I had genius, and might make a name for myself in the great cities of the earth some day; and so it seemed to her that even my poor life might become worth the sharing; and she surely knew that any harvest it might ever reap upon the fields of wealth and fame would be garnered for her only, and into her lap only poured. Or perhaps she did not reason at all, did not at all reflect, but only felt—felt some new impulse, vague and childish, stir at her heart on hearing how I loved her—as never surely woman yet was loved by man—and so leaned toward me and took the gift I gave, and wept a little,

and then softly laughed, not rightly knowing what she wished, nor looking to the future. Yes, that is likeliest. Yes, I would not think all was a lie—then.

Well, I married her. Do you know what life was to me then? A paradise—a fool's paradise, doubtless, but one without cloud or stain or fear or regret upon it whilst it lasted.

She loved me! So she had said, so she had proved. It seemed so marvellous to me! Day and night I thanked Heaven for it, for in Heaven I believed—now. What but a God—pure and perfect as the priests said—could create such a creature as this? She seemed so wonderful to me, this white and golden thing, with her snowy limbs and her rosy lips and her smile like the sunlight, which yet were all *mine*—only mine. When I looked at her in the first faint morning light and watched her soft still slumber, I used to think that this must be a dream—this wondrous ecstasy of mine, this intoxication of possession. What was I, a man so poor, so ill-favored, so grotesque, so destitute of any charm or grace which could win love, that I should have been able to touch and gather such a rare blossom as this was to bloom upon my heart?

With every night that fell, with every day that dawned, I blessed the sacred chances which had led my footsteps thither in the month of lilacs.

All the while I kept the dear branch by me, dead and scentless and without color as it was. It would have seemed no miracle to me if any morning I had found it bloom with fresh bud and leaf, for that would have been not more miraculous than was the beauty and the joy into which my life had suddenly burst forth.

I do not know if ever she quite knew how much I loved her. Poor men cannot show their love in those symbols of rich gifts which women most value and most easily read. No doubt it seems hard and cold in us that we do not lavish on our best beloved all that her heart craves: no doubt it seems to a

young, thoughtless female creature that it is not so much the power lacking as the will when we forbear to hang her neck with gems and fill her hand with gold. And when not only do we fail in that, but when we are even powerless to feed the bright lips we kiss with any save the scantiest fare, and stretch the fair limbs we cherish on any save the poorest bed of straw,—then, I dare say, it seems to her that if we truly loved we should discover some means, by some periling of our body or our soul, to bestow on her the luxuries she craves. No doubt it seems so. And I was very poor. I could not change the manner of my life. The only talent that I had was my talent on the stage; and though I had some true dramatic power in me, I was obscure and nameless, and could not, in a day nor in a year, change my estate. The simple folk of the provinces applauded me, it is true, but to win applause in Paris!—one must be very great for that.

I had always loved the old life, as I say. It had always seemed to me the freest and the gladdest that a man born of the people could enjoy or could desire. But now it seemed to me to alter, some way. It was not fit for her, and it would not give me what I wished for her. To tramp all along the sun-baked roads had been for me no hardship; to be hungry and suffer thirst had been small pain; to go to roost in some straw-yard or cattle-shed no difficult matter when the taverns were all full. The rough jests, the rude revelries, the drinking-bouts and the wine-shop supper-tables,—these had all been welcome enough to me at the end of a long day's travel afoot. But now—she was so young, so fair to see, so delicate of frame, so precious to me, that it was horrible to me to make her toil along the stony, shadowless highways, to lay down her dainty body on a truss of hay, to see the glances of my comrades light on her, and to hear the jests of the drunkards soil her ear. It poisoned the old life to me. I had never wanted anything easier, choicer, better in any manner, for myself; but for her—for

her, for the first time, I envied others; for her I looked with jealousy on the snow-white villas set within their gardens, and the gilded balconies of the pretty houses in the streets, and the silken standards fluttering from the gray towers of the nobles' châteaux, as we passed by them in our route.

Perhaps I should not have felt this had she herself been contented with the life. But she was not.

When we give a woman a great love, she so often repays us by teaching us discontent! Nay, I do not blame her. A man should not take his heart in his hand to her, unless in the other hand he can take also idols of gold and of silver.

Before the lilac had dropped across the path I had only noticed the different way of life of the rich to draw pleasure from it. It had afforded me many pretty pictures as I had looked at it from outside, and I had never felt any desire to look at it more closely or to be angered against it because I stood without. When I had looked through the gilt gateways into some rose-pleasance, where the great ladies sauntered and pretty children played, I had always felt glad that there were people so happy as that, and had passed on, the better for the sight. But now, when I saw such things, I only felt, Why has my darling not such rose-gardens as these, and why should her children be born and nurtured in poverty instead of wealth?

I did what I could to soften what seemed for such a one as she the hardness and privations of our lot. I was able to hire an old mule, which I could lead across the fields and along the highlands where the stones and the sun had so sorely tried her. By doing some turn at hand-labor in the towns where we tarried, such as hewing wood or weeding garden-plats, or fetching heavy weights, I was able also to get a little chamber for her in some quiet place away from the boisterous life of the taverns. Sometimes some one amongst the audiences would take some special interest in my performance, and ask

me what I would choose that he should give me—a bottle of wine, a supper at the restaurant, a bundle of cigars?—and then I would thank him and decline them all, and in their stead select some basket of rich fruit or some cluster of rare flowers, and depart with it gratefully, and take it home to her and enjoy her innocent surprise. I did what I could—indeed I did what I could—but then that uttermost was so little. The love-gifts of one who is poor must always seem so small. How can it be otherwise? What a rich man can do every hour with a mere sign of the hand, a mere stroke of the pen, a poor man can only do so slowly, so laboriously—in such niggardly, foolish fashion, no doubt it seems—once a year maybe, on a fête-day. And that only by sore hard work of body and of mind; for when it is difficult to get enough even to live on, look you, how can one have surplus to spare for roses and trinkets and all pretty trifles such as pretty women love?

It is impossible. But then that very impossibility looks so harsh, so narrow, so miserly, beside the easy lavishness of love that has gold at its call. A woman can hardly believe that you care for her unless at her bidding you know how to make all impossibilities possible.

And how can one be a magician without gold? I have heard that in old times there were men who spent their years and lost their wits trying always to transmute base metals by fire and chemistry into gold. I am very sure that they would never have thought of it unless some woman whom they loved had first wailed in their ear for some jewel they were too poor to be able to gain for her.

I do not know what she could have expected in my life. I had never from the first disguised to her how poor and often hard it was. But she had seen it from the outside, and I suppose she had anticipated more merriment and variety from it. At any rate, she was disappointed, and nothing I could do would avail to render her content. One thing, indeed, she was very restless for, which I denied—the sole denial I ever gave

her of any wish she had. She desired to go upon the boards herself. Some of my comrades told her thoughtlessly that it was a sin, with such a face as hers, to sit behind the scenes in lieu of passing before them to delight an audience. And she would fain have gone. But I—I told her bitterly, the only time that ever I spoke ungently to her, that I would sooner slay her with my own hand than see her give her loveliness to the lewd public gaze. Ay, so I felt. For I loathed to see even the passers-by on the high-road glance freely at her. I could have struck to earth even my best friend amongst our own company when over-easily he parried jests and exchanged gay phrases with her.

"You are a simpleton, Peciolo," the chief of my troop said to me. "Chance has given you in your wife a lantern of Aladdin. But in lieu of using the brightness of your lamp to get your gold, you hide it and bury it in your bosom."

I understood him: he never said it twice to me. Nor were we ever after friends.

My comrades did not regard me with all their old careless amity—any one of them. "Have a care!" I heard them say one to another. "Our old dancing-dog Peciolo can growl—ay, and bite too, it seems. One used to be able to plague him on all sides: he never turned; but now—"

And yet I do not think that I was jealous of her in any foolish or barbarous manner then. I begrudged her no pleasure that came through others. I would have had her happy at any privation to me of body or of mind. I loved her to trick out her delicate beauty in all the fantasies she would, and make it radiant in the eyes of all men. But when a man is ugly as I am, and regards the creature that he loves as I regarded her, with breathless adoration as a thing sent by Heaven, and too perfect to tarry long with him on earth, he cannot choose but bitterly resent any glance or any phrase which would seem to treat a possession so sacred as though it were a thing of mere beauty or rarity,

to be admired and coveted by any chance observer. There are countries, I have heard, where women go always thickly veiled, hiding their beauty from all men's eyes save those of husband or father. I do not wish that it were so in France: I would not desire that the loveliness God has given to be the delight of his creatures should be secreted from view, casting none of its light or glory on surrounding objects. But surely, if a man may not gaze at the stars without a reverent awe, much less should he be permitted to examine with a curious stare or accost with familiar speech one of those beings whose outward beauty was meant as the reflection of an inward purity and sacredness. Therefore it was that I watched closely all who came near her, seeking to shield her from all obtrusive looks or words, even such as she herself might not have noticed or understood. And sometimes, not knowing why I so acted, she would be impatient or angry, and perhaps go away and be silent or petulant, like a spoiled child when it is denied. But then she had so many other moods, when she would sing and laugh and be gay! Yes, I think she was not otherwise than happy then.

It was midwinter when a great thing happened to me—a wonder which I had all my life dreamed of as a glory quite impossible to ever fall to such a one as myself. Whilst we were in the central provinces, playing in a little town at the Noël season, a man from Paris, owning a theatre there—it was the theatre of the Folies-Marigny—saw me act in our wooden booth, and thought so much of it that he sought me out at the close of the performance.

"You are a fine actor," he said. "Has no one ever found that out before now, that you stroll about with a wooden show? Come with me and I will make you known in Paris."

I could not believe my ears. Yet he was quite serious, and had meant every word he had said. I closed with his offer, dizzy with astonishment at such fulfillment of my most golden dream; and then I went and told her.

She threw her arms round my throat and kissed me many times. "Ah, now I shall be very happy!" she cried. "To be in the world at last!" And then she fell to a thousand pretty schemes for feasts and ornaments and all sorts of brilliancies, as though I had become possessor of some vast estate. But I had no thought to check her ecstasies or teach her reason. I was too full of triumph for her sake, myself.

I was so proud and glad that night! My head was so light that I was in amity with all creation.

I bought a simple little supper and a stoup of Burgundy, and called my comrades in to rejoice with us; and I purchased for her some bright gilded papers of sugared meats and a stove-forced rose and a thread of amber beads, for she was a very child in all these things; and my new chief joined with us, and we kept the night right joyously. It was the old *Nuit des Rois*, I knew, and all the town was dancing and feasting, and there were not beneath its many roofs any group gladder or gayer than the light-hearted people who gathered in my attic under the eaves by the light of one little lamp. The Burgundy wine was good, and she looked so fair with the snow-born rose red in her breast, and I knew that all men envied me; and we laughed long and lightly, and my heart was fearless and content as we drank our pledge to the Future.

Ah, Heaven! the old saw may well say that the gods make us blind ere they drive our stumbling fools' feet to our bitter fools' end.

[END OF PART FIRST.]



A BRANCH OF LILAC.

PART SECOND.

WELL, that same week we went to Paris. There I played under my new master: there I won success—in a humble manner.

It was a little theatre, of no great account, and its patrons came chiefly from students and artists and sewing-girls, and their like—merry people and poor. Still, it was a theatre of Paris, a public of Paris: it was a theatre, too, of fixed position and name, built of wood and stone and iron; and such a change was in itself eminence for me, Peciolo, a strolling droll, who had never played under any better roof than a sheet of canvas, which blew to and fro as it would in all the four winds of the air.

It was eminence for me, and might lead—who could say?—to great things—to the greatest, perhaps. It was so much to have one's foot planted at all, one's voice at all heard, amidst the busy throng and the loud clamors of the capital.

Certes, the theatre was every night filled from floor to roof, so I cannot doubt that I did in a measure stand well with this volatile, critical, hard-to-win public of Paris. They applauded me to the echo, and for a season I dreamed golden dreams. Truly, I was not, myself, altogether so much at ease as I had been under the old movable, mutable roof, which had often indeed

been in holes, through which the rains had dropped, but which also had been so easily taken down, folded up and borne whithersoever one would where the life of the hour might promise the best.

I had been a country stroller always. I knew nothing of the great city: the streets seemed to pen me in a prison, and the sea of gas to suffocate me. But still, I was making money: I was making also—in a minor way indeed, but still surely—a histrionic repute. I had ambition—for her—and so, when I drank a pint of red wine, I still pledged with firm heart my future.

She was so well content too. We had a little bright rose-and-white room, gilded like a sweetmeat-box, set very high under the glittering zinc roof of a house of many stories shut in a narrow passage-way amongst many other buildings, close against the theatre. It was terribly dear, and no bigger than a hazel nut, and hot and stifling always, being so near the roof. But she thought it a paradise—a paradise, because above the stove there was a mirror, and opposite in the street, far down below, there was a busy café that was thronged the whole day long; and beneath, on the ground floor, was a great magazine of laces and shawls and such-like fineries, into which the keepers thereof let her

peep from time to time, and even handle the precious stuffs, for sake of her fair eyes. She thought it a paradise, I say; but I—I thought wistfully, many and many a time, of our old clean, bare, wind-swept attics, with their empty walls, and their quaint lattices, and their shadowy eaves, and the little ancient towns where the old belfry bells were ringing in the quiet provinces far away.

I had always been in the air, you see—in the sun and the rain and the open weather: even when I had played, it had been under a tent, where every breeze that blew stirred the awning above my head, and made the little round colored lamps flicker and grow brighter and duller by turns. I had led a hardy, free, open-air life, and the imprisonment of a city—even of such a city as Paris—was in a manner grievous to me. Not that I ever let her think so. Oh no: it would have been very selfish. She was so content! When I came home from the day-business of the stage at noon, I would find her always looking down into the street below, leaning her little soft face on her hands, and watching the tide of life in the café opposite. It was always full, as I said: there was a barrack hard by, and the place was always gay with uniforms and noisy with the clatter and clash of steel as the officers ate and drank at the tables in front of the doors, under the gilded scrollwork and the green shutters. It was a pretty scene: it was no wonder that she watched it; and no doubt I seemed to her a brute, and a fool to boot, when I pulled her one day from her favorite seat and drew the sun-blinds sharply. I could not bear the lewd, bold looks those soldiers cast up at her. She broke out into low, piteous sobbing, and wailed wearily to know what had she done. I kissed her, and knelt to her, and besought her pardon, and blamed my jealous passion, and cursed the world which was not worthy of a look from her. And then she laughed—no doubt I seemed a fool to her—such a fool, good God!—and shut her hands upon my mouth to silence

me, and broke from me and threw the shutter open wide again, laughing still to get her way thus willfully.

The cuirassiers in the courtyard of the café down beneath laughed too. A man poor and ugly and jealous—jealous of his wife—is a thing ridiculous to all, no doubt. They thought me jealous, and they laughed, those handsome, careless, gay youngsters, drinking their breakfast wines under the green vine leaves and the gold scrollwork; but their thought did me wrong. I was never jealous then: jealousy can only be born of suspicion, and I had in her a spotless, implicit, perfect faith, to which suspicion was impossible. But she was to me so sacred and so precious that a light look or a loose word cast at her cut me like a sword. The face that had first looked on me amidst the lilac blossoms always seemed to me a thing of sanctity, a gift of Heaven. I would fain have had the city crowds bend before it as reverently as the poor peasants bend before the images of Mary.

I was never jealous. It had seemed wonderful to me that she could give her beauty to any creature so ungainly in person and so ill-favored by fortune as myself—a miracle indeed, for which I thanked Heaven daily. And that, having thus bestowed herself, she would be faithless, was a thought against her of which I never once was guilty. I am thankful to remember that—now.

Thankful to have been a dolt, a fool, a madman? you will say. Ah well! it is our moments of blindness and of folly that are the sole ones of happiness for all of us on earth. We only see clearly, I think, when we have reached the depths of woe.

The time went by in Paris, and I was successful in my own small way, and she was happy. I am sure she was happy—then. She was very young and very ignorant, and the little suppers at some cheap restaurant in the woods, the simple ornaments and dresses I could alone afford her, the mere sense of the stir and glow and glitter and change that were all around, sufficed to amuse her and keep her contented—

then. Besides, she had also what is very dear to every female thing—she had admiration everywhere, from the gamins who cried aloud her praises in street slang to the titled soldiers who doffed their caps to her from the café court below, and would no doubt have heaped upon her flowers and bonbons and jewels and rare gifts, had I not stood betwixt her and their smiles. They jeered at me and jested about me many a time, I knew, but I turned a deaf ear: for her sake I would not be embroiled; and though very surely they despised me—me, the poor, ugly comedian who owned a thing so fair—yet they did not openly provoke me.

The grief I had—and it was one I could not change—was that I was compelled to leave her so often in solitude. With rehearsal and performance the theatre usurped almost all the hours. But I made her chamber as bright as it was possible, and bands played, and troops passed by, and showmen exhibited their tricks, and churchmen defiled with banners and crucifixes all day long through the busy street below: she said it was amusement enough to watch it all, and she told me she was content, and I had no suspicion. She said she was so well content sitting there at the little window among the plants of musk and the red geranium blossoms, watching that stream of street-life, which seemed to me so tawdry, so dusty, so deafening, but which, I know well, almost always seems paradise to women, who are seldom poets, and who are, almost never, one may say, artists.

All this while I gave offence, and even in some sense lost friends in many quarters, because I kept her thus sacredly, and would have none of the women of our stage associate with her. I have often thought since that this was wrong and harsh in me. What right had I to judge? Priestly benison had never hallowed my poor mother's loves, and yet a gentler and truer little soul never dwelt in human body. What right had I to judge? This poor, gay, frail, light-hearted sisterhood, which had been about me always—had I not seen

in it sacrifice, tenderness, generosity, even heroism, many and many a time, from the first days of my orphanage, when the blue-eyed Euphrasie had sold her necklace of beads to get my motherless mouth bread by the weary wayside? Had I not beheld, time out of mind, a staunch patience under poverty and ill-usage, a cheery contentment under all the evils of adversity, a genuine mirth that laughed through tears, a tender goodness to all comrades in misfortune,—all these virtues and others likewise in those dear friends of my childhood and manhood whom I banned from her because their life was defiled by one frailty? Yes: it was harsh in me, and presumptuous and ungrateful: that I knew too late; and yet it was because I held my lustre lily so soilless that I could not bear a profane breath to stir the air it dwelt in. Well, if this were sin in me—sin of ingratitude and of pharisaism—it has been punished.

So our life in Paris went by until the weeks grew into months, and in all the gardens of the city, and all about the palaces, and in the parks and woods the lilac trees were blossoming with the sweet odors that seemed born to me of paradise. It might be foolish—for I was quite poor still, since the expenses of my new and greater life were more than equal to its profits—but I spent many silver pieces to fill her little chamber every day freshly with endless masses, white and purple, of those flowers all the while they lasted. They were to me the symbol of the greatest happiness that ever man had known on earth. I loved them so well that I was almost superstitious about them; and when they were faded and had lost their color, I hardly liked to cast them aside to go into the dust-cart; and when their fallen petals strewn by millions the green paths through the woods and on the edge of the river, I could never crush them as I passed along without regret.

When the last lilac blossom had died that spring the troop with which I was associated had offers made to it which its leader deemed too advantageous to

reject. His lease of the theatre in Paris had expired in the first days of May, and with the beginning of the month he changed his quarters and took us eastward to the little town of Spa, where lucrative promises had tempted him to pass the season.

I knew it well. In the old times, with my dear old patron, we had often passed through it on our way from Lorraine and Luxembourg to play at the various kermesses of the pretty hill-hamlets of the Meuse district and the villages and bourgs of the wide Flemish plains farther northward. But that had been many years before, and then we had set up our little wooden and leathern booth humbly in some retired quarter, where the poor people of the place could come to us, for we had no means or hopes of attracting the rich, gay crowd of foreign residents. The wood-carvers and wood-cutters from all the villages round about had used to throng to us; but the mass of fashion and frivolity that scattered its gold in the town we had never approached in any way, we simple strollers, playing in a tent which any one might enter for a few centimes a head. But now it was all different. I had an established repute, if not a very great one: I belonged to a settled management; I had the aroma of Paris upon my name; I played at the theatre which all the fashionable guests frequented, and I could afford to dwell no longer at some miserable tavern in a stifling lane, half stable and half wineshop, but in a cheery, sunshiny little apartment that looked out upon the trees of the avenue of Marteau.

My spirits rose as I came once more amongst the woods and fields, and heard the waters brawl and murmur their pleasant song over the stones. The unaccustomed life of the great city had stifled and depressed me, but in this mountain air I could breathe again. I was even childishly happy: I could have sung aloud in very gayety of heart to the chiming bells of the Flemish teams and the carillons of the churches. The eaves, the streams, the hills, the

skies, all seemed to sparkle and to smile. It was warm and light and fresh: the woods were full of wild flowers, the fields were green with the long hay-grasses, the sweet smell of the firs came into the valley on every breath that blew. Ah God! how happy I felt!

In the oldest part of the little place there lived an old man and his wife, who maintained themselves by painting fans and silk-reels and bonbon-boxes and the like toys, such as are made in that neighborhood. They had been good to me when I had come thither, a mere lad, with Mathurin. I went to see them, and took her with me. They would scarce believe that the boy Peciolo whom they had known could be an artist great enough to be playing to all the nobles and gentry in the theatre in the town, which, to them, appeared the grandest building of the sort that any kingdom in the universe could hold. These old people looked long and with devout eyes of wonder at the young beauty of my wife.

"Thou art a happy soul, Peciolo," said the old man heartily; and would make present to her—though I knew he could ill afford it—of a little black fan on which he had just painted with much grace and truthfulness a group of white and purple violets.

The old woman looked up sharply through her spectacles, and said nothing.

"What will she care for it?—it is not jeweled and gilded," she muttered as she went on with her spinning in the doorway in the sun. I have often wondered since how it is that the eyes of women at a glance read the souls of other women, so cruelly, as it seems to us, and yet so surely.

It was a pretty little fan: it had cost him much labor, though it could only have sold for a franc or two. It was a plaything as graceful as if it had been encrusted with diamonds—more so, I think, for the old man had studied the forest flowers till he could portray them to the very life. But a few days later the kindly little gift was lost: she dropped it from the balcony, and it fell shivered to atoms on the ground.

I reproached her gently for her carelessness. "To give thee the fan," I urged, "he will, I know well, have to go for many a day without a bit of meat to boil with his beans and lentils in the soup-pot."

She only laughed. "It was worth nothing," she answered me.

I picked up the poor little broken plaything in the street below, and put the pieces aside and kept them. It was only the carelessness of her youth and of her sex, I told myself. But for the first time that day there seemed to me a dissonance in the chiming bells and the murmuring streams, a shadow on the sparkling sunshine, a taint in the sweet young summer odors of the wood-clothed hills.

Why should she value my love, I thought, more than the little broken fan? It was hardly worth more to her in any sense of wealth.

We were to stay in the town whilst its season lasted. This had scarcely begun when we entered it. There were very few persons arrived then, and I had plenty of leisure-time, in which I took her to spend the hours in the shady alleys of the hills and under the deep foliage of the winding woodland roads, taking our noonday meal most often under the trees of G ronst re. There were two or three of the artists of my company who used generally to go with us: one of them sang well—he was of the South. There were two young painters, brothers, poor but full of talent, and full of mirth and hope: these would accompany us also. We were a gay, light-hearted, merry little group enough, and raised the echoes of the rocks many a time with our part-singing, and many a time brought some great white, mild-eyed bull from out the woods to gaze at us with grave eyes in amazement at our laughter.

They were happy times, full of harmless gayety and blissful belief in the fortunes of the future, in that pleasantest season of the earliest summer, when the first dog-roses were budding on the briers and the abundant dews of the morning silvered every blade of grass,

and were shaken off in a million drops from every stem of cowslip or bough of hawthorn that one gathered. This was yet in earliest summer, whilst the visitors were still few in numbers, and all the green alleys and pretty promenades and shadowy bridle-paths seemed almost all our own, and the fresh mountain air blew through the place cool and strong, untainted by the perfumes and the powders and the bouquets and the wine-odors of fashion.

But very soon this changed. Very soon the avenue grew gay with equipages and riding-parties. Very soon the nobles and the idlers flocked into the little valley-town, and all was movement and color and change from noon to midnight. Of course for the theatre I was glad: the house filled nightly; our bright little comic pieces charmed an idle audience of fain ants. I was well received and became popular, and disputed with the Redoute in power of attraction. Of course I was glad of this. My impressario was well pleased with me, and offered me an increase of salary from midsummer. I even came to be noted enough for people to point me out when I passed into the paths or lingered to hear the music in the Promenade des Sept Heures. "There!" they would say to one another, "do you see him, that quaint, misshapen, ugly fellow? That is Peciolo, the French player. Have you seen him in *Le Chevreuil*? Myself, I like him better than Ravel."

Then would the other answer, "Yes, he is clever, no doubt; but what an ugly beast! And that pretty creature—she is his wife they say." And then they would laugh, and the music would seem all discord to me.

Not that I heeded the taunt about my ill looks: I had become long used to that. I knew so well that I was ugly: that could not wound me. It was the way in which they spoke of her, as if, because I was not handsome, I had no title to her. And indeed it seemed so to myself sometimes. When I moved in the crowded alleys amidst those *beaux messieurs dor s*, it seemed to me that such a homely, ill-favored brown bird as I

was had had no right to mate with that beautiful young golden oriole.

I knew they thought so: I wondered often if she did likewise.

So, though I had success and fair promise of the future from my present popularity, I was ill at ease now that the world had come about us, and that we could no more go and laugh and sing and drink our little cheap wine in the green woods by ourselves without meeting scores of brilliant, languid, graceful people, who stared at us coldly, and then turned aside and laughed.

Amongst these—we met him often—was a young noble of the southern provinces, the Marquis de la Carolyié, a cavalry soldier and a man of wealth. He was as beautiful as a woman: he was beautiful—dead. I see his face now, there where the lilac flowers are.

What? I am alone in my cell, you say, and it is late in the autumn, and the lilac trees are all torn with shot and ploughed up with cannon-balls all over France, and will blossom no more this year, nor any other year, but are all killed—for ever, for ever, for ever!

You think that my brain wanders? It is not so. You cannot see the dead man's face, you cannot smell the lilac flowers, but I can. No, I am quite calm. I will tell you how it all happened. Let me go on in my own way.

This young Marquis de la Carolyié came into the Ardennes with the mid-summer. We saw him very often, a dozen times a day. Every one is always seeing every one else in Spa. I held aloof as much as I could from the gay world. I had nothing in common with it, and no means to shine amidst it. — Besides, every evening I was playing at the theatre; and as I knew no woman with whom to leave my wife, I took her with me to the playhouse, and whilst I was upon the stage she stayed in my dressing-chamber. It was dull, I knew, very dull for her: she wanted to be at the Kursaal and at the balls, I knew, but none of the women there of any fair repute would have associated with her, a girl of the populace, the wife of a comic actor; and with those of light

fame I would never let her exchange a word. So we went hardly at all into any of the resorts of the idle people, yet we saw them and they saw us in the promenades, by the bands of music and in the woods; and so we came a dozen times a day by chance across Carolyié's path, or he, by design, across ours.

He lodged at the D'Orange, and could have had no call to pass and re-pass, as he did, down our avenue; but this he would do, either riding or on foot, continually. I noticed him at first for his great beauty: people as ugly as I am are sure to note any singular physical perfection. He rode in the steeple-chases too, and won; he played recklessly at the tables, and won there also, because he could so well afford to lose; he was sought and adored by many of the elegant and weary women there; he was very rich and very attractive: he was a man, in a word, of whom the world always talked.

I ought to have said ere now that she had her first anger against me—or at least the first she showed—on the score of the gaming-tables. She had urged me with the prettiest and most passionate insistence to try and make my fortune in a night at the roulette-ball. And I had refused, always. I was no better than other men; I did not condemn what they did; but gaming had no charm for me, and it seemed to me that in one who had so little as I it would be utter madness to court ruin by staking that little on the chance of an ivory ball. And my resolve on this point was very bitter to her. It seemed to her so cruel in me, when by one lucky hazard I might make in an hour as much as it took me years to earn. She wanted dresses, cachemires, laces, jewels, like those of the great ladies that she saw; she wanted to sweep along the grassy roads with carriage-horses in gilded harness and with chiming bells, like the aristocratic teams that trotted by; she wanted to go to the Redouté of an evening in trailing trains of velvet and of satin: she wanted, in a word, to be entirely other than she was. It is a disease, very common, no doubt, but it is mortal, always.

She was a soft, dainty, *mignonne* thing, full of natural grace, though she had been but a little Loirais peasant-girl making lace in a garret: she would have taken kindly to affluence and luxury, and would have looked at home in them, no doubt. But how could I give her them? It was impossible.

I could not run the chance of fortune at the roulette-wheel when, if I had lost my little all, she would have been cast a beggar on the world.

So this was a difference and a barrier between us. She would not pardon me, and I could not alter my resolve against my reason and my conscience.

But I think her thoughts were first drawn to Carolyié because she heard from some of our people how recklessly he played at nights, and how continually he won.

Well, one evening he came behind the scenes at our theatre. He knew our chief, it seemed, and was made welcome. He paid me many courteous compliments. He was so frank, so easy, so kindly in his ways, I could not choose but like him. Still, I shut the door of my dressing-room in his face. She was there, making lace for herself, as her habit was, but whilst her hands moved with their old skill, the tears dropped on the network.

"It is so dull!" she murmured pitiously. "It is so dull! You do not think of that, you! You are on the stage there, in the light, with all the people before you applauding you and calling you on; but here! It is miserable, miserable! I can hear them laugh and shout and clap their hands, while I am all alone!"

I could not bear to see her so. I took blame to myself for my cruel carelessness. The next night I asked for a stage-box for her, and she passed the hours that I played in front. Whilst I was acting I saw Carolyié with her. It seemed that he had asked my chief to take him thither, which he had done. I joined them between the acts. He told us that he was very weary of the daily round of gayeties, as they were called. He begged us to let him join

us in our little breakfast-parties in the woods. He had heard us singing often, he had said, and had longed to get away from his friends and join us and laugh with us. I assented willingly. I liked the young man, and his gallant, gracious ways and candid eyes, that were blue as the corn-flowers. I had no thought of any evil, and I had a perfect faith in her.

So the next day he went with us. But our breakfast-parties were not the same — never quite the same. He brought his carriage, with its four black horses with their Flemish collars and their silver bells, and he would have us drive with him; and when the others came on foot, heated and dusty, and joined us at Geronstère, it was not quite the same. My comrades were never quite so merrily absurd in their vagaries, nor did the buffo songs sound ever quite so joyously as they had done when we had all walked up the hilly road together, shouting and rallying one another, and gathering ferns and foxgloves for our caps, like children out of school.

It was no fault of the Marquis de la Carolyié's: he was cordial and gay and *sans façon*, as though he were a Bohemian like ourselves; but yet, with those horses champing in the background in their silver harness, with the champagne that he had brought superseding our cheap little thin Bordeaux, with the bearskins that his servants spread for our seats over the green hill-mosses, — with all this some subtle charm of mirth had fled, some sense of inequality, of difference, had arisen.

I think he must have found us nearly as dull as he said that his own great world was. He took greatly to our company, however: he would forsake his own people for us, always, whenever he could. He would fain have had us go in return to brilliant suppers and the like that he gave in his rooms at the D'Orange, and at which they said that he was accustomed to spare no extravagance. My fellow-artists went to them, but not I: I had no means to return such costly courtesies, and it had always been my habit to

refuse what I could not repay. They thought, no doubt, that I kept her away from jealous fear, but I had no feeling of the kind: that I swear. I liked the young man, and I had no suspicion of evil. It was only that I had always been in a manner proud amongst those whom birth and wealth made my superiors in station, and I could not become a debtor. It seemed to me that it would have a very ill look if I, a man ugly and poor and struggling in my first efforts after fame, should accept the gifts and banquets of this rich young aristocrat. I knew well how my companions would all laugh and sneer and shrug their shoulders, and mutter, "They ask Peciolo because his wife has a fair face; and the fool goes. Oh ho! he knows how his bread is buttered!"

I knew the sort of scoffs that they would surely cast; and I thought it worthy neither of her innocence nor of my honesty to incur them; so that I never broke bread with Carolyié once. But it was not because I ever had an evil thought of him.

Here again there arose matter of difference betwixt her and myself. She thought me harsh and cruel and tyrannous that I would not accept for myself or her the many brilliant offers of the young Marquis de la Carolyié; and I—I could not tell her the real reasons which influenced me; I could not soil her ear with the things that mean, vile tongues would say; and so my motives doubtless seemed to her but poor ones, and perhaps she fancied that I crossed her will and denied her pleasure from sheer caprice or hardness. For a while she reproached me bitterly: for many days she would upbraid me in her pretty, impetuous manner, with her petulant, childlike anger continually; she would take no enjoyment in any scheme that I proposed nor any toy I bought for her; she would tell me always that I hated to see her happy. It was a cruel saying, for she knew, as God knew, that I would have laid down my life any day to give her joy. But she was disappointed, and blind to justice, and angered like a spoilt child that is

denied a plaything: the glitter of the young man's gay and gracious life had dazzled her.

After a week or two had lapsed, however, she ceased to reproach me aloud. She grew very silent, and seemed strangely softened into obedience to my desires on all subjects. She did not care to go out nearly so much as she used to do. It was with some trouble that I prevailed on her to go forth at the hours when the bands played. She would sit all day long by the window of our little chalet in the Marteau road, working at her lace, with a cluster of flowers on the table before her. She talked little; she did everything I asked her; she was often in reverie, musing, with a smile upon her lips, and when I spoke to her after some minutes' silence, she would start up as if awaking suddenly from a dream.

I thought she was not well, and grew anxious, but she assured me that she ailed nothing; and indeed I had never seen her sweet eyes clearer or the rose bloom brighter on her cheeks. I thought it was the mountain air perhaps which was too strong, and made her listless.

Of course I had to leave her very often. I could not anyway avoid it. We were the only company at Spa, and to amuse the fastidious audience for which we played we were obliged to change our little pieces almost every night. This entailed on us great fatigue, and most of all on me, because the various pieces that we now performed were not such as I had acted in when I had gone about with my little wooden theatre; which indeed I had written chiefly myself. Then studying so many new characters, and the rehearsal of them, occupied much of my day-time, and left me but little leisure as the season advanced. Of an evening she would always go with me to the theatre, and sit in the little *baignoire* which they assigned her: occasionally, when I joined her in the entr'actes, I found Carolyié there, but not very often. He somewhat avoided me: I supposed that I might have given him some cause for offence in my persistent refusal of the

many invitations which he had pressed upon me in the beginning of the summer.

Once, too, in quite the earliest days of his appearance there, he had sent her a magnificent bouquet of rare flowers; and I had taken him aside and spoken to him frankly. "You mean well and in all kindness, I know," I had said to him, "but do nothing of this sort with us. Remember that what is a mere pretty grace of courtesy amongst your equals is to people poor and obscure as we are a debt that we can ill carry without losing the only honor that we have—our title to respect ourselves."

He had seemed moved, and had colored a little, and had shaken my hand with cordiality. And from that time he had sent no gifts to her. But I fancied that to me he, on afterthought, resented the words I had spoken.

One night, when the summer was well advanced, I was to play in a quite new piece, in which it was thought that I should achieve a signal success. There were some very great people at that time in Spa: for want of something to do they came to our little entertainments. The favor with which they received and spoke of me was something very promising, and made me more and more valued by my chief. On the whole, life was very good and pleasant to me at that time, and many whose words were of weight said that I should become with time and practice one of the best comedians of the country.

That night she pleaded that she was not quite well—she had something of a headache from the heat of the past day, and feared the suffocating atmosphere of the theatre. She smiled and sung a little to herself, and told me she would sit by the open window in the little alcove which she had made peculiarly her own, and wait for me and hear the tidings of the night's triumphs when I returned. I knew the theatre was oppressive at this season of the year, crowded nightly as it was, and I did not attempt to press her to accompany me.

I took her an immense knot of white

roses which I had bought in the town. She set them in a large blue jar, and said their fragrance and freshness had already done her good. She kissed me and threw her arms about my neck, and murmured with a little tender laugh, "Au revoir, au revoir!" and then bade me go or I should be late. I left her sitting in the window, the unlit lamp, with a small crucifix against it, on the table by her, with the jar of roses. She had her frame and bobbins, and was working at her lace. She looked at me from the open lattice, and waved me a second adieu.

I had no thought, no suspicion. I only said to myself, "Surely she has learned to love me a little now."

It is an old, old story, you will say. Yes, very old.

I left her, and went to the theatre. I remember walking down the avenue in the brilliant sunlight. It had rained at noonday. It was a red and golden evening, very beautiful. The band was playing in the Place Royale. Every one was out. From the little gardens there were all sorts of sweet scents from roses and mignonettes and carnations, and all fragrant midsummer things that were growing in the warmth and the moisture. Clouds in all sorts of lovely shapes swept above the green hills, and seemed to rest on them.

I saw the people go in and out of the gaming-rooms. I pitied them for wasting this divine weather, which they were all free to enjoy as they would, in that feverish atmosphere. Amongst them there came out Carolyié. He appeared to avoid or not to see me: he passed by on the other side, and went on to dine at Baas-Cayuz.

Some one near me said, "What good-fortune that young man has! He wins every day. If he goes on like that one week more, he will break the bank."

Another added: "Because he wants nothing, he gets everything."

I heard, but I did not envy him: I envied no one. I would not have changed places with a king, though I was but a poor actor going to his work, to be shut up in a steaming theatre to amuse others

with the tricks of gesture and of language. I would not have exchanged my lot for that of an emperor. I was so happy that night, as I went on through the town, away from the smell of the gardens and woods, and the sounds of the music and the falling waters, and the singing of many little birds, into the dusky den where I dressed for my part in the playhouse!

The new piece was called *Le Pot de Vin de Thibautin*. It was very absurd and humorous, and yet graceful. I have never played in it since, and yet every line of it is burnt into my mind.

I had a fresh and genuine success in the part of Thibautin. I was recalled five times, and the house, which was a full one, applauded me to the echo. A great duke who was there, a foreigner, came behind the scenes and gave me a gold snuff-box of his own, and spoke very high words of praise. I knew my future was sure: I had a reputation which would grow with every year in France. I went from the theatre a happy man.

It was still very warm—a beautiful dark, starless night. The clouds were heavy: there was a sort of hush in the air. There was only just light enough in the little town to make deeper by contrast the circle of the hills. The flowers scented the air more strongly still than at sunset: they were heavy with great dew.

All was so quiet. Every one was in the ball-room or the card-room. The casements stood wide open in the deserted houses. Here and there the little colored lamps glimmered. Here and there a woman leaned from a balcony. I went on down the avenue of Marteau. In the stillness I could hear the brook running over the stones, and the rustle of the leaves in the water as the wind stirred them.

I looked up at the windows of my little rooms. The light shone through their green shutters. The vine that climbed around them was dark against the reflection. I looked up, and, though I had known little of God in the life that I had led, I blessed Him.

Yes, I blessed God that night. I opened the door and went up the stairs and entered my own chamber. I looked for her in her accustomed place, near the lamp, in the alcove, where the great jar of white roses stood. She was not there.

I need not tell you any more, the story is so old, so old.

For many weeks after that night I knew nothing. I was mad, I believe. They say so. I cannot tell; I remember nothing; only that blank, deserted room, and the great mass of white roses, and the lamp with the little crucifix under it, and the empty chair with the lace-work that had fallen beside it, all unfinished and untangled. I can see that always, always.

She had gone without any word or any sign; and yet it was all so plain. Every one had foreseen it, so they said—every one except myself.

From that night nothing more was ever seen or heard in that place of him or of her: the people of the house knew nothing; so at least they said. But on the floor, under the mirror, there was a torn letter, which had been forgotten or mislaid. Not many words were in it, but they were words enough to tell me that when she had kissed me on the mouth, and smiled, and sent me on my way to play in my new part that evening at sunset, she had known that when the night fell she would betray me.

It is a woman's way, they say. I might be really mad: they told me that I was; it may be so. I think it was quite late in autumn when I had any sense or consciousness of what I did or what I spoke. The place was all deserted, the woods were brown, the music was silent, the flowers were dead.

I awoke stupidly, as it were, but yet I was quite calm, and I knew what had chanced to me. It seemed to me that I had lived many years since that horrible night. My hair was gray. I felt feeble and old.

Life was ended for me, you know. I wondered why I was not dead as others were, and quiet in my grave. When they let me go I walked out into the

forsaken streets: they looked so strange—there was scarce a soul in them, and the shutters of the houses were closed. I had only one idea—to follow them, to find them. And I had lost so much time: it was now nearly winter.

My chief and his troop had all gone, of course. What little money I had had people had taken whilst I was unconscious. They told me I owed my life to charity. My life! I laughed aloud in their faces. They were afraid of me: they thought I was mad still. But I was not. I knew what I did, and I had one fixed purpose left, which was quite clear to me, and for which alone I endured to live an hour.

I was a fool—oh yes!—and she was worthless. No doubt, no doubt. But then—I loved her.

Not that I ever dreamed of winning her back. Nay, do not think so base a thought of me. My life had been upright and without shame in the sight of men: I would not have stained it with any weakness so unmanly and so foul. But I had a purpose, and that one purpose gave me nerve and strength.

In the gray of the morning I left the town. I had not a coin in the world. My one little talent was killed in me. My career was gone. My dawning reputation was already a thing of the past, forgotten by all men. You see, she had destroyed all for me utterly. But no doubt she never counted the cost. They do not think, those fair, soft, smiling things.

When I had come into that valley I had had an honest past, a precious present, a hopeful future. When I left it—Well, it matters not now. I died then. The bullets to-morrow for me can have no pain.

It signifies little to tell you how I have subsisted betwixt the time that I quit-
ted the little town in the mountains and this day when I lie under sentence of death. My old career had become to me abhorrent, impossible. Such skill as I had been master of had perished out of me. If I had gone upon the stage, I could not have said a word nor moved a limb. The old pursuit, the

old pleasure, familiar and dear to me from my childhood, was all withered up for ever. Men have played—and women too, I know—a thousand times with hearts broken and bleeding, and the world has applauded them. But with me any talent I had ever possessed was gone for ever: to have passed within a playhouse would have made me mad, I think. That last night I had been so happy—that last night, in the fullness of my joy, I had blessed God!

I lived—no matter how. The life of a very wretched creature, but still not the life of a beggar. The manner of my existence from my birth up had taught me to live almost upon nothing, and had taught me also many ways of providing for myself such scanty daily bread as I was forced to eat.

All the winter long I sought for tidings of her—and him. But the land was wide, and months had gone by and I had no knowledge of where he dwelt, and I gleaned nothing that was of any service to me.

When I reached Paris I abode there for a while. I reasoned that soon or late—being of fair fortune and of lofty rank—he would of a surety come thither. So I waited.

I waited all of the winter, but he did not come. I worked my way into his own country, and tried to find traces of him. I saw his great palace amongst pine forests, the place as of a prince, but I learned that he had not been there for several seasons. He had deserted it almost utterly for the world of cities. They said that he was in Italy. I traveled thither, but there I was always too late: he had left each city before I entered it. It is no use to tell of all those wanderings, none of which bore any fruit.

Once, in Venice, I only missed him by a day: a gondolier told me that he had a woman with him fair as a rose.

Ah God! that was in the sweet time of spring. Everywhere the lilacs were in flower.

I lived to hear that and to see the trees blossom. How can the bullets hurt me to-morrow?

Let me make an end quickly. I lived, wretchedly indeed, but still I lived on: I would not lie down and die without my vengeance.

The summer came, and with summer, war. When it was declared I was on the frontier. I hastened into my own country as well as I could, being on foot always, and having to work my way from village to village, day by day.

I had lost everything. I had become feeble, stupid, dull: I was what they call a monomaniac, I think. I thought always I saw her face toward me amidst the lilac clusters. I never spoke to any one of her, but that was what I saw, always.

I had lost all the mind I had ever had, and when I met any of my old comrades I shunned them. Some of them wanted to pity me, to assist me. They meant well, no doubt, but I would sooner that they should have stabbed me. I avoided every one and everything which could remind me of what I had been, and I was morose, and perhaps in a manner mad: I do not know. But when I heard of war I seemed to myself to awake. It seemed to call to me like a living creature. I was good for nothing else, but I could still strike, I thought. Besides, I knew he was a soldier. It would go hard if I found him not somewhere in the *mêlée*.

And indeed I loved France: still, in the misery of my life, I loved her for all that I had had from her. I loved her for her sunny roads, for her cheery laughter, for her vine-hung hamlets, for her contented poverty, for her gay, sweet mirth, for her pleasant days, for her starry nights, for her little bright groups at the village fountain, for her old brown, humble peasants at her wayside crosses, for her wide, wind-swept plains all red with her radiant sunsets. She had given me beautiful hours; she is the mother of the poor, who sings to them so that they forget their hunger and their nakedness; she had made me happy in my youth. I was not ungrateful.

It was in the heats of September that I reached my country. It was just after

the day of Sedan. I heard all along the roads, as I went, sad, sullen murmurs of our bitter disasters. It was not the truth exactly that was ever told at the poor wineshops and about the harvest-fields, but it was near enough to the truth to be horrible. The blood-thirst which had been upon me ever since that night when I had found her chair empty seemed to burn and seethe, till I saw nothing but blood—in the air, in the sun, in the water.

I had always been of a peaceful temper enough. I had always abhorred contention. I had lived quietly, in amity and agreement at all times with my fellow-creatures. It had used even to be a jest against me that if any man were to rob me I should only think of how best I could shield him from justice. But all that was changed. I had become, as it were, a beast of prey. I wanted to *kill*, to appease the sickly hot thirst always in me. You do not know? Well, pray to your God, if you have one, that you may never know. No man, I think, is ever safe from coming to know it, if Fate so wills. A day can change us so that the very mother who bore us would not recognize her sons.

I hated myself, and yet I could not alter what I had become. If we are held accountable hereafter for such changes in us, it will be very unjust. We cannot escape from them.

By the time that I reached the centre of France, they were everywhere forming new corps and bands of franc-tireurs. In one of these latter I enrolled myself. I was strong of body and of good height, though somewhat misshapen: they were glad of me. For me, I had only one idea—to strike for the country, and, soon or late, to reach *him*.

I fought several times—they said, well: I do not know. Probably I did, for I flew on them like a tiger—that I can remember—and of personal pain or peril I had never any consciousness. We lived in the woods. We hid by day: by night we scoured the country. We made fierce raids, we stopped convoys, we cut telegraph wires, we inter-

cepted orderlies, we attacked and often routed the invaders' cavalry. We knew that if taken we should be hanged like common murderers for the guilt of patriotism, but I do not think any one of us ever paused for that: we only attacked them with the greater desperation. Sometimes, in the forests or on a highway, we would find the body of some one of our comrades hung by the neck to a straight tree, though he had been taken fighting fairly for his country's sake: such a sight did not make us gentler. We poured out blood like water, and much of it was the proud blue blood of the old nobility. We should have saved France, I am sure, if there had been any one who had known how to consolidate and lead us. No one did; so it was all of no use. Guerrillas like us can do much, very much, but to do so much that it is victory we must have a genius amidst us. And we had none. If the First Bonaparte had been alive and with us, we should have chased the foe as Marius the Cimbri.

I think other nations will say so in the future: at the present they are all dazzled, they do not see clearly—they are all worshipping the rising sun. It is blood-red, and it blinds them.

In time it became known that I fought, they said, like ten men in one. They gave me an officer's grade in the real army. It was the doing of Gambetta, I believe. For me it made no difference. Place, name, repute,—what could these be to me? I was dead—dead with my old life: it was a devil, I thought, that inhabited my body, and drank himself with blood into a likeness of humanity—as humanity is in war.

I was drafted from the free corps into the battalions of Bourbaki. I saw more service, hard service, and the Republic said that I did well. By my side there often fought and often fell old comrades of my own. The comedians and the artists did their full duty by France: the derided kingdom of Bohemia sent hundreds of its brightest leaders in loyal answer to the call of Death.

Well, all this while I never saw his face, though continually I searched for it, and for it alone, in the tempest of a charge and in the slaughter-heaps after a battle.

"Is it a brother you seek always?" men asked me often, seeing how I would lift up face after face from amongst the dead upon a battle-field, and let each one drop, and go on again upon my quest. And I answered them always, "One closer than a brother."

For was he not?

But all this while I never saw his face. France was as a great sea in storm, on which the lives of all men were as frail boats tossing to their graves: some were blown east, some west: they passed each other in the endless night, and never knew, the tempest blew so strong.

One day there was a bitter strife. It was in the time of our last struggle. We were trying to cut our way through the iron wall that had raised itself round Paris. We failed, as the world knows, but we strove hard that day. At least all those around me did, and for a little space we saw the granite mass roll back from us, and we thought that we had won.

In that moment, in the white thick shroud of smoke where I pressed forward on foot with my comrades of the line, there came on with us, in a beautiful fierce sweep like lightning, a troop of horse half cut to pieces, with many of its chargers riderless, and with its thinned ranks hidden in clouds of blinding dust. But, shattered though it was, it charged for us: it was one of the southern nobles' free corps of cavalry, the cuirassiers of Corrèze. Close against me a gray horse, shot through the body, reeled and fell: the rider of it sank an instant, then shook himself free and rose.

It was he—at last!

He knew me, and I him, even in that mad moment. I sprang upon him like a beast; my sword was at his throat; the smoke was all around us; no one saw; he was disarmed and in my power. My men and his shouted together,

"En avant! en avant!" They thought they were victorious.

I heard, I remembered: he too fought for France. I dared not slay him. I let him go.

"Afterward! afterward!" I said in his ear. He knew well what I meant.

He caught a loose charger that galloped snorting by; he seized his fallen sabre; he swept onward with his troops; I charged in line with my own men. With the roar of the firing in my ear, and the shouts of our fancied triumph, I pressed onward and downward into the ranks of the enemy: then I dropped senseless.

When the surgeon found me at dawn the next day, I had no wound on me. For the victory—it had lived only in vanquished soldiers' dreams, as all the victories of France have lived in this bitter season. I woke to consciousness and to remembrance, saying again and again in my heart, "Afterward! afterward!"

The time soon came.

I saw him no more then. The cuirassiers of Corrèze passed eastward. Those whom I served sent me into the capital. It was now the beginning of the new year.

There soon came to us that deadliest hour when all we had done and endured received as recompense the shame of the capitulation. How long is it ago?—a day, a year? I cannot tell. I was amongst those who held it a crime, an outrage, a betrayal. I did not pretend to have any knowledge, any statecraft, but I knew that, had I been a man in power there, sooner than sign the surrender I would have burned Paris as the Russians did Moscow.

There were many who thought as I did, but we were not asked, were not counted. We had but to hold our tongues, and stand quiet and see the Germans enter Paris.

Then you know this other war came, the civil war. I was in the capital still. It seemed to me that the people were in the right. I cannot argue, but I think so still. They might go ill to work, unwisely perhaps, but they asked nothing

unreasonable, and they were not at fault—in the commencement, at least.

When the strife and carnage had ceased, I felt very strange. I felt as men do who have been long in the great roar of a cataract, and who come suddenly again where all is quiet. The calm seems to daze them. So the stillness bewildered me. I began to think that it had all been a dream, a nightmare; only I remembered so well the look of his eyes into mine when my steel was at his throat, and if I dropped asleep a while I always awoke muttering, "Afterward! afterward!"

At this time I often went and looked at the house where I had dwelt with her in Paris. A shell had laid open the little rose-and-white room under the roof; the front and back walls had been torn away; I saw the day through them; some of the gilding of the mirror still clung there. Another shell had struck the little gay theatre where I had played for the first and last time in Paris: it was now a blank and smoking ruin. And it had been such a little while ago! Great Heaven!

At such times I asked myself why I had spared him.

I was dull and silent, and lived wholly to myself: all the people I had known were slain or had perished of want.

I made no new friends, I dwelt aloof. Nevertheless, the day came when I had to choose sides: whilst one lives at all on earth one cannot be a coward. I chose the side of the people; I cast in my lot with them; I remained in Paris. They might be right, they might be wrong—I do not say: I knew they were my class, my kind, my brethren. I abided by their election. The world will always say they were wrong because they failed: of course; but I think they were only wrong in this—that they tried a mighty experiment before the earth was ripe for it. It is fatal to be before your time—always.

But it was not because I thought them very right that I joined with them. I was no politician: I hardly asked them what they meant. I cast in my lot with theirs because I was of them, and be-

cause it would have seemed to me a cowardice to desert them.

All that horrible season went by slowly, slowly. It was but yesterday, you say: it seems a thousand years ago. I was cooped up in the city: it was much worse than the first siege. I went out in many sorties. I made no doubt he was at Versailles, and every day that I arose and went into the air I said in my soul, "There will be no need to spare him now."

On the bastions where the red flag was set, through the smoke of guns, I used to stand hour after hour, and look across at the woods of Versailles, and think to myself, "If only we might meet once more—once more!" For I was free now: his brethren fought against mine. It was the thought that nerved my arm for the Commune.

I think it was with many as with me; or something like it. I remember in that ghastly time seeing a woman put the match to a piece whose gunner had just dropped dead. She fired with sure aim: her shot swept straight into a knot of horsemen on the Neuilly road, and emptied more than one saddle.

"You have a good sight," I said to her.

She smiled. "This winter," she said slowly, "my children have all died for want of food—one by one, the youngest first. Ever since then I want to hurt something—always. Do you understand?"

I did understand: I do not know if you do. It is just these things that make revolutions. This is only away from us by a day or so, you say? It is strange: it seems to me half a lifetime.

It was a horrible season. The streets ran wine and blood. The populace was drunk, and savage in its drunkenness. The palaces were pillaged, the churches reeked with filth. I fought without the gates when I could: when I could not, I shut myself in my garret, so that I should not see or hear. So far as I had sense to feel, my heart was sick for France.

One day, when I was going from the fortifications through the by-streets to

the place that sheltered me, I passed through a street which had been almost utterly destroyed by shell and fire.

The buildings were mere skeletons, the hearths and homes mere heaps of calcined dust. The rafters, the bricks, the iron girders, the rubble and the rubbish had fallen pell-mell amidst the broken mirrors, the shattered gilding, the scorched pictures: perhaps under the mountains of cinders and of ruin the charred bodies of the dwellers and the owners might be lying: no one knew. It was all desolate, dark, unutterably miserable. Yet amidst it all there was one lovely living thing, surrounded everywhere by devastation, but uncrushed, unharmed, untouched. In what had once been a green and cherished little garden there sprang upward a young lilac tree in full flower, fragrant, erect, wet with sweet dews, covered with blossoms—alone amidst the wreck.

For the first time since she had left me I fell on my knees and hid my face in my hands, and wept—as women weep.

Soon after that the end came. Paris was on fire in a thousand places. They slew the hostages: they did strange and fearful things. You have seen them more clearly than I. I was in the midst of the smoke, of the violence, of the flames, of the bloodshed, of the ignorance, of the ferocity: I was too close to it all to judge any of it aright. Evil had become their god; and yet in the beginning of the time the people had not been to blame.

From the day they put the old priests to death I would fight no more for the Commune. But I knew that the Commune would fall, and so I would not forsake them. I think many felt as I did—detested the acts into which the people had plunged, but would not forsake them on the edge of ruin. I would not fight again for them, but I went forth into the streets and stood and looked. It seemed hell itself. The sky was black: everything else was illumined by the fires.

The Versaillais were pouring in: I

do not know how many hours or days had gone. It seemed to me all night—all one endless night that the endless flames illumined.

Little children ran past me with lighted brands in their hands, which they flung into houses or cellars, laughing all the while. Women black with powder, with their hair loose and their breasts bare, streamed by me like furies, shrieking curses till the shot struck them and they dropped upon the stones.

From the windows, from the roofs, from the trees, the people fired upon the soldiery: the soldiery raked the streets with their fire in return, and stormed the dwellings, and threw the dead bodies out of the casements. The roads were wet everywhere with a tide of blood, always rising higher and higher: the corpses were strewn in all directions. Some lay in the aisles of the churches, on the steps of the high altars. You know, you know: I need not tell it. It will seem strange to you, but in all that horror I thought of the lilac tree: I went and looked for it.

The street behind, the street before, were both burning: in the little garden there had been a bitter strife: the dead lay there in pools of blood by scores. But the little lilac was still erect, its green boughs and its sweet blossoms blowing in the wind.

There were some little birds that had their young in a nest in the lilac boughs. They were uneasy: they twittered and fluttered about amongst the leaves. It was so dark they thought that it was night. But the church chimes were tolling noon.

I sat down on a pile of timber that had crushed the grasses at the roots of the tree. I sat still there and waited. I could do nothing. I could not fight for them: I would not fight against them.

Down the ruined, smoking street, as I sat thus, there came a soldier hastily, with his sword drawn, glancing hither and thither rapidly, as one who had lost his way or missed his men. His dress was splashed, torn, covered with dust, and here and there with blood,

but it was the dress of a soldier of rank. As he came the glare of the fires in front shone full on his face, his beautiful face: I knew it in an instant.

God had delivered him into my hands. So I said in my soul, exultant. We always charge our crimes upon God.

I sprang up and stood in his way. "At last! at last!" I cried to him.

He wavered, paused and looked at me bewildered: no doubt I was greatly changed, and in the horrid scorching gloom he did not recognize my features.

I gave him no breathing-space, but drew my sword and rushed on him. "Defend yourself!" I said in his ear ere I touched him. We would fight until death—that I swore in my heart—but we would fight fairly, man to man.

When I spoke he knew me. He was a brave man and loyal. He raised no shout to rally his comrades. He took my challenge as I gave it. He threw himself in a second into position. "I am ready," he said, simply.

We were all alone. The fire was around us on all sides. The dead alone were our spectators. The little lilac tree waved in the wind.

Our swords crossed a score of times swift as the lightning: then, in a moment as it seemed, he fell forward on my blade: his body drooped and doubled like a broken bough.

The steel had passed through his breast-bone. I had my vengeance.

It was a fair fight, man to man.

He looked up at me as he sank down dying on the stones.

A strange shadowy smile flickered over his mouth.

"You were revenged—before," he said slowly, each word drawn feebly with his breath. "Did you not know? She betrayed me last autumn to the Prussians: she had a lover amongst them greater than I."

A rush of blood choked his voice: he lay silent, leaning upon one hand. The flames shone upon his face, the smoke drove over us, the little lilac tree blew in the breeze, the birds murmured to their young ones.

Then all at once the street grew full of men. They were his own soldiery. They rushed on me to avenge his death. With the last effort of life in him he raised himself and signed them back. "Do not touch him," he cried aloud to them. "It was I who injured him: I fall in fair fight."

Even as he spoke a shudder shook him, and he died.

His head was on the stones; his hair was soaked with the blood that had already been shed there; a gray pallor stole over his face; and yet even then he was still beautiful.

The lilac blossoms, loosened by the driving wind and by the fire's heat, fell softly on him, one by one, like tears.

I did not stir: I stood there looking down at him. My hate of him had died away with his young life: I only pitied him with an intense passion of pity. We both perished for a thing so vile.

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His comrades and men heeded nothing of his words: they arrested me as they would have done a common felon. I did not attempt to resist them. I had broken my sword and cast it down by his body: its end was accomplished, its fate was fulfilled: I had no further use for it.

They have brought me hither, and to-morrow they will kill me.

What is the charge against me? That I, a soldier of the Commune, slew a soldier of Versailles. It is enough, more than enough, in these days. I say nothing. I am glad there should be an end.

If you ask any grace for me, ask only this—that the men who fire on me shall not be the same men by whose side I fought so long for France; and when they throw my body in the ditch—see here!—let them bury this branch of lilac with me. It is of no value—it is dead.



AYTOUN.

A ROMANCE.



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AYTOUN.

CHAPTER I.

"And yet they think that their houses shall continue for ever, and that their dwelling-places shall endure from one generation to another."

AYTOUN lies at the very edge of Bridgeford, near enough for a pleasant walk for the young people by the hedges and under the lindens which skirt the greater part of the road. It offers a pleasant change from the dust and noise of the busy manufacturing town, and at the end of that walk a hearty welcome and a somewhat old-fashioned hospitality. For though our manners and customs have decidedly changed since our grandfathers' days, yet here and there in some corner of the land there are still traces of the old ways, and the owner of Aytoun is not the only one who prides himself on keeping up the ancient style of things.

Although busy, dirty Bridgeford is only half a mile from the gate of Aytoun, you would never suspect it, for the house is shut off from sight by a small

forest of trees, and no sound reaches it save the mill-whistle, which, robbed of its shrillness by the distance, sounds almost musical.

Originally, the house was shapely enough, but from time to time there has been added to it a wing or a bow window, as the needs or tastes of the possessor dictated, until now there is not much form or shapeliness left to the old building, though its exterior is suggestive of cozy rooms and pleasant nooks, as well as of stately drawing-rooms and chambers. A home-like house, yet with some display of elegance and ornament—such a house as our grandfathers understood how to build much better than we do now.

But one would scarcely stop to look at mere bricks and mortar when there are such grand old trees to rivet one's admiration—trees which tell plainly of the growth of centuries, and which quite dwarf their foreign connections, who are doing their best to grow tall, and not to

appear mere shrubbery under the shade of the huge oaks.

Aytoun is not kept in the perfect order it once gloried in. The hedge is no longer closely shorn to seem a vivid green wall. The turf is short and velvety, for it never needs a scythe, the trees demanding the full vigor of the soil, and permitting no superfluous growth around them. But they cannot prevent the violets and dandelions from showing themselves in the early spring, and no one has the bad taste to root them out.

Money is scarcer at Aytoun than it used to be in the old times, and the place begins to show its poverty. Perhaps the very lavish hospitality it once boasted of has helped to impoverish its present owner. It used to be said there was more corn eaten by the horses of its guests than would satisfy most farmers to send to market as the sum-total of their crop; and every one knows farmers are not easily satisfied.

Fortunately, customs have changed since those days, and Bridgeford is no longer a mere village not boasting even a well-kept tavern, so that whenever a stranger arrived, if he looked respectable, he was expected to be sent to "the house," to enjoy its hospitalities so long as his business or pleasure detained him in the neighborhood. Now, the furthest that is expected of Aytoun is to offer a hearty welcome at any hour, a plate at the dinner-table for any one who may chance to drop in at the old-fashioned hour of three, an occasional dance in the hall, a game of croquet on the lawn, and a mount for half a dozen equestrians when there is a riding-party.

Aytoun has still its pack of hounds, but they are kept more for the name of the thing than for any use that is made of them. The fox seldom shows himself in the neighborhood of noisy, dining Bridgeford, and when he does steal out the farmers grumble at the hurry-scurry scamper over green wheat-fields by men on nags of every description, following the baying hounds. But in former times none had asked leave or license to follow the fox if they could jump the high worm-fence; a Philip

Dunbar had always led the way, whether through his own broad fields or those of his neighbors; and many a time had the horse been taken out of the plough and mounted by its owner to join in the pell-mell race.

Philip Dunbar, the present master of Aytoun, does not possess one half the acres his forefathers did, because of this same hospitality and fox-hunting. He is the last of his race, with the exception of his sister Hortense, a girl barely out of her teens, who does the honors of the old place for him gracefully, as she is bound to do, and who wins hearts, when she chooses, by her courtesy as well as by her beauty.

My story opens on a glorious October day, and every available hack at Aytoun is called into requisition to mount a numerous party of young people who are bent upon a ride to the rapids. These rapids are a succession of small falls in the river some miles above Bridgeford. They are not only picturesque, but have proved useful in hurrying the water down the stream, thereby furnishing a considerable water-power, which has been the means of transforming the once pretty village into that abomination of abominations, a manufacturing town. Every one seems slow to move to-day, whether because it is comfortable under the great trees, which have lost so many of their leaves that they do not keep the warm sun from diffusing its grateful rays, or because there is some trouble in deciding which of the horses can best put up with the one-sided seat and flapping skirts of the ladies. There is a good deal of noise, much laughter, some shifting of saddles and an occasional mishap in mounting, with not a few pretty fears and terrors on the ladies' parts, and needless anxieties and assurances of safety on the men's. But at last every one is ready, and Philip Dunbar, as he has the right to do, leads the way down the long avenue of oaks to the iron gate which opens on the high road.

In these days of photography, when one expects a picture of every acquaintance, it will be as well to give a slight

sketch of some of the riding-party. Philip Dunbar is the rider of that bay horse. He is evidently a good one, though there is no chance of exhibiting his horsemanship in the quiet pace at which he is going: he gives you the idea that the horse and his rider are not distinct animals, but one and the same.

He is certainly a handsome man, but of a type of beauty which is neither Saxon nor Spanish. The charm of his face consists in its coloring, for the eyes, hair, eyebrows and lashes, as well as the short curly beard, are all of the same shade of red brown, which some call chestnut, but which has more warmth in it than that nut ever shows. Exposure has darkened by many shades the naturally fair complexion, but it cannot hide the rich color which seems burnt into the skin. The nose is small and shapely, and the mouth is wisely hidden by the red-brown moustache—wisely, I say, for as an index of character it might be perplexing. Smiling, it might be handsome; in anger its expression would grow sinister, perhaps a little cruel.

By the side of Philip Dunbar rides a pretty blonde. Hers is a style of beauty men often rave about, but women seldom admire, unless they prefer camellias to violets. Grace Robson wins more hearts, it is said, than any girl in Bridgeford. The women say her stock-list helps her, but then women are often more keen than just in their decisions on such points.

There is no need of describing every couple riding down the avenue; so we will let the others go by, and look only at the last.

The lady is Hortense Dunbar, who, with a certain old-fashioned courtesy, keeps behind her guests until they are well out of her domain and on the public road. In her position as hostess she can see better the needs of every one by being the last in the long line of equestrians. She is not very watchful, however, but is listening to the remarks of her cavalier, as of course she should do, for every one knows she has been engaged to Bryan Bonham for two years at least—so long, indeed, that no one thinks it worth while to notice them.

Hortense is wonderfully like her brother. She has the same brown eyes and hair. Her complexion is dazzlingly fair, and the color comes and goes fitfully. There is no need to hide the mouth, for it will be tender whether it smiles or not, and there are certain curves at the corners which tell you that in prosperity or adversity Hortense may be depended upon.

Her cavalier is dark and handsome—a little too fond of his own will, possibly, both with mistress and steed, if one may judge from the way he manages to make both fall behind the rest of the party.

The road is narrowing now, winding through a long stretch of woods. Either the shadows are suggestive, or the party have wearied of making superhuman efforts to keep up a general conversation; for now the different pairs are dropping into confidential whispers, though perhaps most of them could still shout out their words and tell no secrets.

With Hortense and Bryan you can judge whether a whisper is needful. He is saying in a low voice, "I have had a letter from my grandfather which I should like to show you, only every one will be wondering at the confidential terms we have dropped into should you be seen reading my letters."

"A letter from my grandfather!" repeated Hortense. "It sounds formidable, much like Sir Walter Scott's pretty but dry history-lessons. I suppose, though, if one has a grandfather, it is natural that he should write to one."

"I suppose it is—at least that has been my experience. If those people ahead would only be sagacious enough to quicken their pace, so as to be beyond seeing as well as hearing, I should like to show you the letter."

"I wish they would then, for I should like ever so much to see it, if only as a specimen of what my own grandfather might have done. Could you not smuggle it to me under the disguise of a dropped handkerchief or riding-whip?"

"I do not want to show it as a specimen. I did not look at it critically, and it only seemed to me a commonplace, gentlemanly letter, not at all fine nor

worth examination as a curiosity. It is not the style, but the matter, of the letter that I wanted your opinion of."

"I beg pardon," replied Hortense, meekly: "I meant no disrespect. I have no kinsfolk older than Philip, no one else to write to me, and he does it but seldom. Not more than half a dozen notes has he ever written to me in his life, and they are by no means commonplace, or, I suppose, in the strict sense of the word, very gentlemanly. At least, there is some slang in them, with a good many inquiries about the horses and dogs. I take it for granted your grandfather's style is somewhat different."

"I should hope so. I can't imagine Philip writing letters such as mine is. As I can't show it to you, I must tell you the contents as well as I can. The old gentleman is very anxious that I should settle down as—"

"I hope he has not heard anything to make him anxious?" interrupted Hortense, turning a mock-serious face toward her lover.

"Nothing special, I fancy. At least he does not find any fault. Yet it is a sorry, worthless life I am leading, without a home or any one to look after me, and the old gentlemen is wise enough to see it."

"Sorry and worthless!" Don't overthrow my belief too suddenly. I thought only young women led worthless lives—young women who have nothing special to do, I mean."

"If we are both making honest confessions, it is time we should mend our ways," retorted Bryan, with a little twinkle in his eye at the prospect of tripping her on her own words. "There is but one way to improve matters for both of us, with any likelihood of success."

"But I rather like my worthlessness," Hortense maintained, coolly. "Philip is used to it, and you—"

"And I must wait Philip's pleasure. Is that what you would say, Hortense?" asked Bryan angrily.

"His *convenience* would be a better way of putting it," Hortense answered with a little nod.

"Then I tell you, plainly, I am some-

what tired of being pushed aside for this same Philip Dunbar."

"Pushed aside, indeed!" exclaimed Hortense. "I only wish I had the strength to try it actually, not figuratively. There is a great talk just now about woman's influence, but for my part I am sure you men would be much better managed by hard blows and drivings, if we women only had the power to try it."

"There is an easier way than that. But I do not intend to follow Samson's example and show you where my weakness lies. What I wish to do just now is to prove to you that there is some one in the world worth caring for besides Philip."

"And the headings of your arguments are—"

"First, that this same Philip, though known to have some influence over misguided womankind in consideration of his good looks, ought to have none whatever over *you* where one Bryan Bonham is concerned."

"But what if I don't care to argue the point?"

"You can certainly say which ought to have the most influence with you—Philip or I."

"Philip, by all means. Has he not been a mixture of grandfather, father, guardian, brother, companion and playmate these many years? and would you have me leave him in the lurch now, when he needs me most?"

"A sort of natural protector, by your own showing, but not at all better able to fill these numerous offices than I am."

"But you cannot take my place with Philip."

"He can get another housekeeper, if you are thinking of his creature comforts. Besides, he will find a wife soon if you leave him to his own devices."

"He will do that some day without my urging," said Hortense, with a little jealous feeling at her heart, "and he will not ask my leave. It is never considered hard for a woman to uproot herself. I suppose we are regarded as a species of air-plant, which can grow to whatever gives the necessary support."

"I am sure I am anxious to give you the needed support," replied Bryan. "I have not the smallest objection to your putting out as many pretty clinging tendrils as you will, if they only draw you closer to me."

"But I dislike vines and all such silly expedients in Nature," Hortense responded — "trailing, helpless things, which bear with their full weight, though they break or bend what they lean on. I would rather be a bare telegraph-pole than yonder handsome trumpet flower, which is killing the tree it seems to be beautifying with its gay flowers."

"It is well you are engaged, Hortense, and thus give contradiction to your expressed opinions; and it is well, too, you are telling them to my ear only. Most of the Bridgeford people would think the cant of the day was cropping out of your talk. Gerald Alston would have a fling at you, and your dearly beloved Philip would frown you down most certainly."

"Fate forbid such a misunderstanding of my plain meaning! Not that I fear Mr. Alston's fling or Philip's frown. I should be more apprehensive that on some bitterly cold night my ghostly kinswomen at Aytoun would turn me out of doors as an unworthy daughter of our Adam-loving race."

"I wish some of your grandmothers would punish you by turning you out, and I could find you just chilled enough to care to warm yourself by my fireside."

"You would like to pick me up as charitable people do beggars. As a class, they are said to be terribly ungrateful, and I may be no better than the worst of them."

"I would run the risk. Here we are in sight of the river, and we have come to no definite plan. You have gone round and round like a horse in a circus ring, and we are no nearer our wedding-day than we were when we began our talk. I have not an idea what answer to give my grandfather."

"He has not a thing to do with our vexed question. You can't bring in your revered relative in that way, Bryan, trying to play upon my ignorance."

"But it should not be a vexed question, and you should give me a serious answer to my serious question."

"And you frighten me at once by your serious manner. Let us drop the subject, for to-day at least."

"No, I will not drop it, but press it boldly. Hortense, when shall the wedding be?"

"Philip's, do you mean, of which you were warning me a little while ago?"

"No, certainly not: I mean our own."

"Oh, ours? Let me see: this is October and Wednesday. It shall be to-morrow year. That will give us both breathing-time."

"To-morrow year, indeed! I will take the whole matter in my own hands, and fix the day myself."

"And it shall be—"

"Let me see," Bryan said, mimicking her: "this is October and Wednesday. It shall be to-morrow month."

"November? Nonsense! Only a man could think of such barbarity as to propose such a freezing glimpse of Niagara as one would have next month."

"But a glimpse of Niagara is not necessary."

"There you show your ignorance. A veil, a ring and a trip to Niagara make a wedding now. In our grandmothers' time it used to be a vow, a blessing and a punch-drinking, but of course they are obsolete."

"The veil and the ring, by all means, but we are strong-minded enough to forego the waterworks."

"All or nothing," Hortense says, and whips her horse surreptitiously, thus forcing him to join the group, who are dismounting, with a bound which looks a little vicious to those who do not see the lash.

Bryan reins in his horse somewhat impatiently. He is not one who likes to be foiled even in trifles, but there is no help for him; so he comforts himself with the knowledge that there will be an opportunity to resume the conversation during the morning in spite of Hortense's desire to avoid it, and that there is also the ride home, when he will manage

better and keep his betrothed jogging quietly in the straight road.

If Hortense had been mounted pillion-fashion behind Philip, as in the days of her great-grandmother would have been seemly and maidenly, instead of holding the reins in her own hands, she would have listened with more patience to Bryan's entreaties to fix a day for their wedding. She might even have acceded to his own proposition, in spite of the inconvenient hurry it would entail. But, riding as she was a half mile behind, she did not catch a word of the love-making Philip was doing so bravely.

Poor Hortense! She was willing to put off her lover and the sound of her own wedding-bells until it suited Philip's convenience to part with her. She would never have dreamed of giving up her place as housekeeper at Aytoun with the month's warning which is required of the hired servants. Yet Philip, without a thought for her loyalty, was as impatient to oust her from her position, and as anxious to fix his own wedding-day for November, as was Bryan—Bryan who had been engaged, Rumor said, at least two years.

But two years, two days or two hours alike seem of long duration if we are very eager for a thing. It is the one childish feeling we never quite outgrow, and just now Philip Dunbar is very eager for a speedy wedding, and is urging it without a thought about Hortense, who is as painfully put to it to manage comfortably for her lover and brother as was the man who had to cross a river with his fox, his goose and his bag of corn. She has indeed no fear but that her woman's wit will help her through. But then she knows nothing of what Philip is saying to Grace Robson, nor how warmly he is urging his suit.

And Grace is listening to Philip's love-making with no desire to laugh it off or to avoid straight answers. She has her longing, her ambition, as well as the rest of womankind, and will be a little unscrupulous, perhaps, in attaining it. It is rather a silly one, some may think, but there is nothing more humiliating to most of us than to confess the object of

our ambition. It is such a high-sounding word, and we use it for such a poor end if we are honest enough to own it. The consummation of some women's wishes lies in making a good pudding, and Grace Robson thinks she should have all that is desirable in life if she were mistress of Aytoun.

What more could Grace Robson need than she has now? is a question most who know her will ask. She is pretty, rich in her own right, petted by the women, adored by the men. Surely there is nothing she longs for? Yes, one thing—just what Philip Dunbar can give her, and what, in her opinion, no one else can.

It is not his love: there are half a dozen men she could like just as well if there were no other consideration. Nor his money, for he is poor almost to a proverb. But to be mistress of Aytoun is her heart's desire. To have the name of Robson blotted out by the more euphonious one of Dunbar. To be no longer known as the proprietress of Blidale Mill, but as the wife of the master of Aytoun.

Grace's own home is much more costly and showy than Aytoun ever was in its young, palmy days—showy with fresh paint and new gilding, costly with upholstery and expensive knick-knacks; whilst Aytoun is rather dingy in regard to paint, and most of the furniture was brought across the sea to the colonies by the Dunbars themselves—very grand in its day, but then its day is over.

People are perverse in this world, and it is just the newness of her house and the freshness of its gilding which makes Grace dissatisfied with it. But what could she not do with her money at Aytoun? How she would reign there, bringing back by the magic of this same money the old-fashioned hospitality there were still so many pleasant traditions of in the county! And she could introduce, also, many of the gayer fashions of the present day.

Out of all the din and bustle of Bridgeford, scarcely within hearing of the shrill whistle of the Blidale Mill, too remote for any suggestion that the wife of Philip

Dunbar has any special reason to dislike the sound, Grace thinks she spies Eden through the iron gate at Aytoun, and she is as ready to listen to the whispered invitation to enter as was Eve to the temptation that was to thrust her out.

Philip Dunbar is on the winning side to-day. A handsome man on a handsome horse, which he rules with boldness and skill, has always a certain power over the woman he is riding with, especially if she be a little timid. And Grace certainly is so, perched up on her uncomfortable seat. Her reliance is that Philip is near enough and expert enough and anxious enough to manage her horse as well as his own.

Then, too, the day is delicious, and makes the match seem all the fairer. Fair in the strict sense of the word, too, for though Grace has her father's sharpness for a bargain, she is honest in the main, and she would shrink back if she were sure Philip wanted only her love, and that her money was nothing to him. If the scales do go down a little more heavily on her side, she is not to blame. There are other mill-owners in Bridgeford with pretty daughters, but there is not another family as old as the Dunbars in the county.

So Philip can make love without fear of an ungracious No, and ask the question which needs so simple an answer, and which every woman expects to answer at least once in her life. But further than this Grace will not commit herself. She has her ideas of dignity and propriety, and it will take more than half an hour for Philip to argue them away, if he ever does.

But the whole party have dismounted now, and the horses are fastened to a tree or sapling as it chances to be found. There will be an hour spent in strolling or lounging on the cliff, in flirting and jesting—an hour in the pleasant October sunshine, which will beam down regardless of whose lives are marred or made under its warmth.

Hortense and Grace keep together as closely as the Siamese twins, though heretofore there has been no intimacy

between them. A common danger draws them together.

Bryan is gnashing his teeth, and wishing in his wrath that Grace was between her own mill-wheels rather than in his way. He little dreams that in her hands lies his future. For is she not about to push Hortense out into the cold, and had he not wished her there if he were only near to find her?

Philip is sulky, and he is blaming Hortense as much as Bryan is Grace, only not in such a bloodthirsty, impetuous way. But both the men are comforting themselves with the thought that the ride home will be a specific, and so at last they grow better tempered.

"Have you two vowed to keep together to-day, as Sisters of Mercy do, for mutual protection? or are you trying what strong contrasts will do?" asks Bryan, stretching himself at the feet of both, for the simple reason that if he would play faithful dog to Hortense he must also to Grace.

"We only wish to prove that it is a slander on the sex to say we prefer the society of men to that of each other. I do not see anything at all in bad taste if Grace and I prefer each other to you and Philip," Hortense replies.

"In the belief that you can have either of us if you please. But let any other fellow come in sight, and your pretty intimacy will not last very long."

"If you mean to hint I am here because I cannot help myself, you are mistaken. I have had an invitation to stroll in the woods, and another to go down to the river; and I can testify to Grace's having had still greater chances, though she will not speak for herself," returned Hortense, finding, for some unknown reason, Grace wonderfully silent.

"You know well enough that there is not a man here you care to exchange a word with. I never saw such a stupid party ride through the gates of Aytoun," Bryan retorts.

Hortense raises her eyes and glances around her a little disdainfully. There are a few of her acquaintances, but none who belong to her circle of intimates.

And Grace glances around too, with a

little flush on her face, for she sees many friends and some ardent admirers. She is tempted to turn on Bryan for his arrogance. But Philip answers instead, knowing the party is pretty much of Grace's own arrangement: "Hortense need not be so confoundedly proud: there are men here good enough for her—at least they are for me."

"Men who can buy us out twice over," Hortense returns, with a little shrug. And then she could have bitten her tongue out for her speech, for the flush on Grace's cheek, called up by Bryan, burns into scarlet.

Philip too notices Grace's heightened color, and he feels savagely toward Hortense, who, for the life of her, cannot see why he minds so much her little inadvertence: he at least ought to know she did not mean anything.

"Why, Gerald, where did you drop from?" Bryan cries out to a new-comer on the field, equipped with gamebag and gun, whose opportune appearance offers an opportunity for giving another turn to the conversation.

"Not from Bridgeford, certainly," the owner of the gun and gamebag answers, "or I should have known of your party, and should not have joined it so uncereemoniously. I have been gunning since day-dawn, and have been fortunate in more ways than one, it seems."

"Your early start accounts for your not being one of us. I sent word to you I had a horse for you," Philip says.

"I should not have been one of you, even if I had received the message, which I did not," Gerald replies, coldly.

"I am not surprised at your preferring gunning on such a day as this," is Philip's careless rejoinder.

"Preferred not accepting the invitation," Gerald says, very distinctly.

Philip's face darkens, and there seems a likelihood of stormy words at least. But the cloud passes, and he replies indifferently, "Make your peace with Miss Robson: the invitations were hers;" and then he walks away.

"Is the party yours?" asks Gerald of Grace as he takes off his gamebag.

The girls are sitting on the cliff, on the

very edge of which Bryan is reclining. It would not be pleasant to go spinning down a hundred and fifty feet and end in the fretful waters of the rapids, or perhaps be sucked into the small whirlpool just at the foot of the cliffs. But Bryan does not seem to be apprehensive of such a tumble, nor is Gerald Alston afraid of risking his precious life, for he is about taking a position by Bryan's side at Grace's feet.

The two girls are using an old gnarled tree, which conveniently offers itself to be leaned against, as a back for their seat on the grass, and Gerald has placed his gun against the tree before he takes his leaning posture beside Bryan.

"Oh, Mr. Alston, please move your gun!" Hortense cries out in a fright.

"There is not the slightest risk."

"Of course not to you and Bryan, who are some distance off, but Grace and I are uncomfortably near."

"It will do no mischief: it is not cocked," Bryan testifies.

"I suppose guns are never cocked when they kill people accidentally. I would not sit so near the cruel thing for worlds," Hortense persists.

"But indeed there is no manner of danger," Gerald asseverates, unwilling to move from his position at Grace Robson's feet.

"I think if I am uncomfortable that is reason enough for moving the gun," Hortense says, a little haughtily; and then adds apologetically, as Gerald rises with rather a bad grace to do her bidding, "My fear is constitutional, and no amount of common sense brought to bear upon it can overcome it."

"Does your brother never hunt?" Grace asks.

"Yes, but he keeps all his firearms out of my sight, in his own special room, and if he does chance to leave one about, I give it as wide a berth as I can."

"If he would only respect all her feelings as he seems to respect her silly fears!" Gerald whispers to Grace as he resumes his seat.

The words fail to reach the ears of Bryan, about whose hearing them or not Gerald is indifferent. But they are

heard by Hortense, for whose ears they are not meant. Grace blushes a little, for she forgets that Philip's love-making has not yet been published; and Hortense blushes too with anger, but disdains to answer what was evidently not intended for her hearing.

"I tell you what, Hortense," Bryan says, unconscious that there has been any by-play going on, "you ought to be strong-minded enough to cure yourself of your nervousness about guns. You ought to learn to fire a pistol, and then you would see it isn't so wonderfully dangerous."

"It would not cure me. I should be just as much afraid the next time."

"No, you would not. And it may be necessary some time for you to handle one. I have heard of women making good fight in an emergency."

"I would rather succumb than fight if I could only use firearms. I cannot tell you the actual pain it is to me, and I cannot imagine my overcoming it."

"I suppose most of us have a fear if we were only honest enough to confess it," says Grace. "I acknowledge mine is a cat. I am in deadly terror of being in a room alone with one."

"What is your terror, Alston? I haven't found out mine yet," says Bryan.

"Yet you have one, notwithstanding," asserts Hortense.

"And it is—"

"A fear of not having your own way."

"It is one I often suffer from, then. But I am wiser than you, and am determined to get rid of it."

Hortense laughs, but does not take the threat much to heart.

"Have you been to Grafton's to-day?" Gerald asks Bryan, after a little silence which had fallen on the party.

"No, I seldom go there."

"I thought not," Gerald says, with some significance. "You have not seen Raymond nor Harwood this morning?"

"No; and, by the way, neither of them is here. Some prior engagement keeps them, I suppose."

"And yet you are here," Grace says, turning quickly to Gerald, as if surprised

he should be, since his two friends are not.

"I only stumbled on you, you know; and after Dunbar told me the party was yours it would have been rude in me to leave," Gerald answers.

"I should have excused you, as I have done the others of your set," replies Grace, curtly.

"They did not know the invitations were yours," apologizes Gerald.

"Neither are they, but Mr. Dunbar's. I cannot see that that makes any difference," says Grace, hotly.

Hortense is a little amused at Grace's evident feeling at the slight the absentees have put upon her. And that she should fight for Philip too she thinks a little unnecessary. Therefore she hears more plainly than she cares to, Gerald Alston dropping his voice into a whisper as he says, "There is a difference, though. A gentleman would not refuse your invitation, and he would scarcely accept Mr. Dunbar's."

"Come, Bryan, it is time for us to be going. It is nearing our dinner-hour, and Mr. Alston seems only up to a tête-à-tête this morning. One has a disagreeable consciousness when one hears whispering—not always merited, I suppose, but none the less unpleasant for that."

Bryan is quick enough to obey Hortense's move, for has he not been looking forward to this ride home for at least two good hours? But he seems born to disappointments to-day, for no sooner is Hortense in her saddle than she urges her horse into a mad gallop, and does not slacken her speed until she is at the gate of Aytoun. It is impossible for Bryan to remonstrate, for his words would be scattered to the wind: they would never reach Hortense's ear.

Hortense's leaving is a signal for the whole party to be on the alert, and the sound of horses' feet behind him tells Bryan there is no hope even of a last word at the gate. He consoles himself, however, in the remembrance that there is a dance to-morrow night at Aytoun, and that then Hortense must listen to him. He does not fear that his eloquence will be without effect.

Grace rises to leave as soon as Hortense does, but she has to wait until Philip comes to her and then goes for her horse. She hardly notices Gerald as she busies herself in arranging her skirt. But he keeps near her, nevertheless, until Philip brings her horse. Then Gerald comes forward to mount her, holding out his hand. But Grace draws back and will not accept the privilege of stepping on it.

"This is my right," Philip says. "Miss Robson is in my charge, and must look to me for all such courtesies."

"I suppose she can make a choice," returns Gerald with a frown on his face, and not giving way an inch.

"Of course I can," answers Grace quickly, "and I prefer Mr. Dunbar to mount me."

"You are not very wise in your choice," says Gerald coldly. "An old friend is always more worthy of your trust."

Grace opens her eyes in surprise at Gerald's speech, but fails to see anything at all suspicious-looking about Philip; and Philip flushes angrily for a moment, and then laughs as he says, carelessly, "It is hard on Gerald to see me preferred before him. But, honestly, I only insist upon my right."

And Gerald mutters a little loudly, "Honestly, you have no such right."

But no one seems to hear him, for there is much movement and merriment, and the whole party are in haste to be in the saddle again. In a few minutes Gerald Alston, having no horse to ride away on, is sole possessor of the late pleasure-grounds.



PART II.

CHAPTER II.

Who frowns at others' feasts had better bide away.

ANOTHER bright day has succeeded the one my story opens on, and Hortense is eagerly devising the ways and means for the dance expected at Aytoun to-night. It is no new festivity, for the young people of Bridgeford are rather fond of dancing in the old hall, and the arrangements are always necessarily few. The piano will do duty for an orchestra, and the impromptu supper, such as only the housekeeper at Aytoun can concoct, will be sure to be a success.

Hortense is restless to-day: why, she scarcely knows. Perhaps, she feels she was rather hard on Bryan yesterday, and that she ought to have answered his urgings not with banter, but with mild arguments. We are so apt, when we are attacked, to seize the first weapons of defence we find within reach, and afterward we see that we should have done much better if we had left them alone altogether.

But Hortense is not much cast down by her yesterday's experience. She has resolved that she will be kinder to Bryan to-night, but she has also decided not to leave Philip too hastily. Bryan must be patient, and not urge such a speedy fitting. If she left Philip uncomfortable and lonely, she would be unhappy, no matter how many pretty vows Bryan might make to console her.

So she resolves very decidedly and very blindly, as mortals are apt to do. Yet she does not conquer her restlessness, and, the glad, bright sunshine inviting her, she goes out to cut roses to deck the drawing-rooms in honor of her expected guests, and whilst doing so to hasten, if possible, the hours, which somehow lag greatly to-day.

In amongst the rose bushes, Hortense forgets her desire that time should fly faster. The blossoms are so lovely, so perfect, each leaf folded over another as

if at its heart there were something precious it would hide, unlike the sweet June roses, which are more open-handed, and ready to scatter their bright leaves at the sighing of any wind or at a careless shaking of the branches. But in June, with the whole summer before them, they can afford to be liberal.

Hortense loves her roses, and whilst she is cutting them she has an eye for every straggling spray, and a helping hand to twine it. She is nearly hid in the bushes as she stands there, but she hears a man's step on the gravel, and she peeps out through the boughs to see who is coming.

It is only Philip, booted and spurred for a ride to Bridgeford. But he has a word to say to Hortense before he goes—a word which he seems to find some difficulty in speaking, for he begins bunglingly, though with seeming carelessness. "Have you any message to Grace Robson?" he asks, stopping in the walk near Hortense among her rose bushes. "I am going to Bridgeford, and shall call there."

"I have none," replies Hortense indifferently. She has failed to notice the rather familiar mode in which Philip speaks of her yesterday's friend, or perhaps she knows that gentlemen have a habit of dropping the conventional Miss. She does not dream there is any special reason in this case. "Of course you can tell her I expect her here to-night," she adds.

"You two seemed to take a great fancy to each other yesterday," Philip goes on, gathering, as he talks, the rosebuds within his reach, and making a tiny nosegay of them—"a mutual liking, I should think, judging from appearances."

"Bryan was disagreeable," Hortense explains, "and I found a third party necessary."

"You women will play off any one if you have an end to gain. I thought

with your feminine sharpness you had made a discovery, and wanted to win appreciation for it."

"I made no discovery, except that Grace was rather stupid and taciturn, you decidedly sulky, and Mr. Alston inclined to be impertinent. That was my yesterday's experience of our party."

"Grace and I were preoccupied, and could afford to be silent, and to let Gerald's insolence pass. She is a dear girl— Confound the thing!"

The change of voice is so sudden as sufficiently to betoken a change of subject. But Hortense does not care to mark intonations, so she asks, "What has the dear girl been doing to make you so fierce in your expletives?"

"Do you not see what the thorns have done to me?" he returns, holding up a torn palm to view. "I cannot see how you manage to handle the things."

"The roses are very much like the 'dear girls:' both are apt to hurt you if you give them a fair chance. I know enough of my roses to handle them in gloves. Let me gather yours for you. Are you York or Lancaster in your color? If they are for Grace Robson's wearing, let them be red by all means."

Hortense has come to the edge of the gravel-sweep, and she is reaching for a splendid Giant of Battles, so that Philip cannot see her face when he says abruptly, "Grace and I are engaged, and I supposed you would like to hear of it at once."

The gorgeous rose still blooms on its stem, for Hortense has brought her two hands together suddenly, dropping the scissors in the act. She repeats, as if she doubted her own hearing, "Engaged!"

"Yes," Philip answers; "and it is a good thing for me. Grace is pretty and good-tempered. I can't expect you always to take care of me. We can't be perpetually like Charles Lamb and his sister."

Philip has left out what most men consider Grace's greatest charm—her money. He is too much of a gentleman to mention it just now.

"Of course we could expect nothing of the kind, seeing there is a certain

Bryan Bonham in the world," Hortense says quickly. "But I did suppose I should have had some intimation of what was going on before everything was decided."

"And so you would if I had had any myself. I had not thought of going quite to the length I did yesterday."

"The delicious day and the ride and Grace's blue eyes made you lose your head, I don't doubt," Hortense says, mockingly, knowing none of these things have ever influenced Philip before.

"Not exactly," answers Philip, and then he stops. He might have told what had really urged him—some trying letters received in the morning's mail. But as he never showed Hortense such letters, it was not to be expected he would make any such confession.

"And Grace likes the wooing?" asks Hortense, finding Philip has come to a halt.

"Of course she does. You do not take me for an unsuccessful swain, do you?"

"No," Hortense answers, glancing up at her handsome brother. "I am not surprised at her Yes—only at your asking for it."

Philip may take this as the silly speech any sister may make, so he asks coolly, "What fault have you to find with Grace?"

"None whatever. She is pretty enough and rich enough, and yet she is not exactly the style of girl I should suspect you of fancying."

"I did not know I had shown any preference for a particular style. Grace is a lady, and will do credit to any position," Philip says shortly.

"I suppose she will. Will you bring her to Aytoun, or live round the corner from Blidale Mill? Either position may be convenient."

Philip shrugs his shoulders: "I expected something kinder than sarcasm when I told you such a piece of personal news. It is better to tell a woman a fact and not wait for comments, for you will be sure of being hurt if you do."

"I will not again," Hortense says, penitently, if not quite intelligibly. "Is

the wedding arranged, or only the engagement announced?"

"I would name a day next month if I had my own way," Philip says, not looking at all like the rash lover his words imply he is; "but Grace will not even let our engagement be known."

"I always think a woman has not quite made up her mind when she is afraid to announce her engagement," Hortense says, suspiciously.

"You and Bryan seem to have acted on that idea. But I am not sure that Grace is not really wiser. She does not care to set the gossips of Bridgeford talking before she can help it."

"It need not be a long engagement if Grace does not wish it to be," Hortense says, knowing there is no difficulty in the way, as there has been in her own case.

"It won't be a long engagement, you may depend upon it. You can comfort Bryan with the certainty;" and Philip stalks off, forgetting the roses he had scratched his hands to pluck.

Hortense lingers amongst the flowers, her face telling a very different tale from that of half an hour ago. She is a little pale, and there is a troubled look in her eyes. She is not thinking of Grace, but of Philip, wondering how this sudden fancy to marry Grace Robson had come upon him.

If Grace had been a stranger to him, and he had met her for the first time, she thinks she could have understood it. But as they had always lived within a mile and a half of each other, Hortense confesses to feeling puzzled. Yet she is sorry she was not more cordial and interested when Philip spoke to her. Why will people tell unpleasant news abruptly, and then, when you have no breath to speak, expect you to pour out your delight?

There is a comfort in thinking that Bryan will be pleased at the match. Hortense cannot gainsay anything he may propose now. She will be cordial to Grace to-night on Philip's account, and perhaps he will forget she did not receive the promise of a sister-in-law with rapture. And so she goes back to

her roses, cutting them off from the parent stem sharply when she remembers they will soon belong to Grace, and then again more gently and tenderly as she hears her own wedding-bells keeping time with the nodding flowers.

Hortense has gathered up her spoils now, and has gone into the house. And Philip has left his horse at a livery-stable, and is walking up the principal street of Bridgeford to Grace Robson's fine, new-looking brick house.

Grace has visitors this morning—so many visitors that if Philip had had a hint of them he would have turned round the corner instead of entering. He could have taken an inventory of the windows and doors in his future property, Blidale Mill, and if he had waited a few minutes would have seen the swarm of work-people come out as the whistle shrilly told them of their dinner-hour. But he does not know who are in Grace's drawing-room, and he is in some haste to arrive there.

There are somewhat more than a dozen people in the long, handsomely-furnished room. The greater number of them are ladies, but there are a few gentlemen, who seem to be constant visitors, judging from their knowledge of the most comfortable chairs to lounge in.

All but Gerald Alston, who is seated uncomfortably enough on the music-stool. He seems to be the chief speaker just now, and what he is saying is evidently unpleasant to Grace, for her face wears an irritable expression not often seen on it.

"I think the whole thing had much better be given up," Gerald is saying. "Of course none of us can possibly go after what I have told you, and I do not see how you ladies can, without any gentlemen."

"Neither do I," one of the matrons answers. "Of course none of the girls will care to dance with each other, and where the gentlemen cannot visit is, I am sure, no place for us."

"I can't see any point to your argument," answers Grace hotly. "Gerald's generalities may have influence with the gentlemen, who seem to have unbound-

ed confidence in his opinion; but why we can't dance at Aytoun because they see fit to decline, I don't see exactly."

"It is better sometimes to keep from particular accusations," Gerald replies in a lower voice to Grace. "Philip Dunbar has behaved in an ungentlemanly way, and I, for one, do not care to accept his hospitalities."

"Philip Dunbar ungentlemanly!" exclaims Grace with scorn. "If our surroundings help us to our breeding, his should be perfect."

"As a carpet-knight, I grant. But that he is an upright, honest gentleman, as his forefathers were, I deny."

"But your proof?" says Grace, still hotly. "We require something more than mere assertions if we are to be rude to Hortense."

"It may be difficult to make you ladies understand. But every gentleman knows how a man is regarded who ignores a debt of honor."

"Oh! a debt of honor!" says Grace with curled lip. "I think I, for one, comprehend you, though you pay me but a poor compliment upon my astuteness. One cannot help recalling the retort of the unlucky wife of a man who kept a gambling-table at one of our Springs when she was cruelly shunned by the virtuous ladies in the house for her husband's misdeeds. 'Oh, there is but a small difference in our husbands' positions,' she exclaimed one day to them. 'Mine stands behind the table, and yours before it.' So with your debts of honor. The wrong is in the playing, and the man who wins is no better than the man who loses."

"Certainly not: there I agree with you. But the man who cheats comes under neither of these heads."

Gerald Alston's words have somewhat the same effect that a clap of thunder would have upon the light merriment of a ball-room. Grace would fain make a bitter retort, but she is speechless, as much at Gerald's audacity as at the villainess of the charge.

"We cannot countenance a cheat, and my daughters cannot possibly go to-night," remarks the same matron who

had thought the girls having to dance together an insuperable objection. She is too immaculate a person to countenance cheats. Perhaps she does not know that her own liege lord is notorious for mixing refuse cotton in his cloth.

"But what will Hortense think? We certainly can't disappoint her at the very last moment," says one of the young ladies, who likes to dance and likes Philip's handsome face also.

"She will not care if Bryan Bonham is there," one of the men answers.

"I hope not," Grace says wrathfully. "And if she wants to dance, I have no objection to play for her."

"Will you go, Grace?" asks one of the more timid of the womenkind.

"Certainly I shall. I wonder you are not all of you ashamed of being led so meekly by the nose by Gerald Alston."

"I can prove what I have said," Gerald replies coolly, "though you seem to doubt it. First, there is—"

But what there is he does not explain. For just then the door opens and Philip Dunbar enters.

I wonder that in the old, old times, when people were so beset by their fondness for treason, and very often lost their heads for their foible, they should have been so foolish as to meet and talk over their intentions. It may be they had more control over features and voice than we have in these degenerate days. For I defy you to pull to pieces your neighbor's character, and, if he or she should chance to walk in, give no hint by voice or manner who had been under discussion.

Philip Dunbar, as he stands in the doorway, knows very well that he has been passing through the ordeal, and that the verdict is against him. Every one is looking guilty and ill at ease. Even Grace, who has done some small skirmishing for him, is a little stiff and formal from being taken by surprise, and she will need time to recover herself.

Gerald Alston alone is cool and collected. He swings himself round on the music-stool, and plunges at once into conversation with the girl nearest him. His defection as chief speaker has left

the rest of the party like sheep without a leader, until the honest shoddyite's wife bethinks herself of taking leave, and the rest gladly follow her example.

Not much does Philip Dunbar care for being left out of all the handshaking. Neither does he seem to notice the very cold shoulder Gerald Alston is pleased to turn on him. He is waiting very patiently for these gay butterflies to take wing, and he will not trouble himself to sweep them away by a rough word.

Grace waits until the door is shut on the last of them, when she exclaims: "Do you know what they have been talking about?"

"Hardly, as I have only heard their adieus."

"They have decided not to go to Aytoun this evening," says Grace, with a scared look on her face, as if she were talking treason.

"Indeed! what a misfortune! It is well there is no supper to be spoiled. Only Hortense's roses are wasted. By the way, I had some of those roses for you, but I lost them." How he had lost them he does not say.

"But you do mind their not going after they had promised?" says Grace, thinking what seemed an insult to her womanly feelings must be felt as such by Philip too.

"Why should I? If they do not wish to dance, I do not care to force them."

"But Hortense will care. What has made them behave so?" asks Grace, turning suddenly to Philip.

"How can I tell? I only know their decision as you repeat it to me."

"It is something Gerald Alston has heard, and he repeated it to the men—something about what he calls debts of honor," says Grace hesitatingly, hardly knowing how far she can venture without being caught in a storm.

"It is Gerald Alston's work, is it? I thought it was a mere whim of the ladies. Of course, if Alston has had a hand in it, that makes all the difference in the world."

"How does Gerald Alston make it different?" asks Grace, becoming frightened after having done the mischief.

"It is a question between men, and the ladies have nothing to do with it. Let us talk of something else. I came hoping to hear pleasanter words than Gerald Alston's slanders."

"What did you come to hear?" asks Grace absently, for she is thinking just now more of Gerald Alston's words than of Philip's.

"I came to ask what I was bent on yesterday, only some troublesome body prevented me. I want to know how long you intend to keep me uncertain and from being the happiest man in the world?"

"It is not well for mortals to be too happy," Grace says, sententiously.

"Then you are harder on me to-day than you were yesterday, for certainly you were more encouraging."

"But to-day I may change my mind."

"So Hortense says. She thinks until a woman is willing to acknowledge her engagement she is reserving a corner to creep out at."

"Hortense! What does she know of yesterday?"

"I told her of my good luck, this morning," Philip says, carelessly.

"Told Hortense! Is that the way you keep your promise?"

"I did not suppose you included Hortense. She is very harmless, and will keep our secret if I ask her. Except, of course, from Bryan: you would not like such a precedent, I suppose."

"And Mr. Bonham will tell his friends. You might as well have told it in the market-place at once."

Philip does not say that he would have preferred that, and, not being able, has taken the next best mode of proclaiming it.

"What did Hortense say when you told her?" asks Grace, in a tone that betrays her curiosity in regard to the point.

"More than I should like to repeat to you," Philip replies, not able to recall anything very pretty that Hortense had said. "She is a good child, and always likes what is for my special good."

"But she must have said something you can repeat," urges Grace.

"Of course she did, but she shall tell you herself what she thinks. Bryan wants her, fortunately, so she will not be jealous of you."

"Jealous! I should think not," Grace says.

She has no sisters or brothers, so is ignorant of the bond that binds them, but thinks she understands it and all others perfectly, and that only lovers like Philip and herself are ever jealous.

"Hortense does not like to leave me alone, and so she thinks you will not mind naming the wedding-day soon," Philip says artfully.

"If she feels so anxious she can defer her own," Grace replies, a little nettled at being hurried for Hortense's convenience.

"Poor Hortense! She has waited already two years, and seems doomed to an indefinite tarrying."

"I can't be in such hot haste. Why, it was but yesterday you told me you cared for me, and to-day you would have me fix the wedding-day. Such breakneck speed takes away one's breath."

"But if I need you, Grace?"

"Oh, of course you need me: I take that for granted. But my comfort is something to be thought of, too."

"I don't look forward to making you uncomfortable. The Dunbars have always been passably good husbands, and I flatter myself I am no renegade of my race."

Philip's words take Grace at once to Aytoun, where the Dunbars had brought home their brides for generations. And a little glow comes into her cheeks as she thinks that she too will call the old place home. She will do the honors there as the best of them did, if she does bring the money from Blidale Mill to pay the fiddlers.

"You will be the fairest bride ever brought to the old home," Philip says, reading her weakness in her flushed cheeks. "And you will bring back the old hospitality and the old customs. Hortense is shamefully negligent about such things."

It flashes through Grace's mind that

Philip cannot complain that Hortense's negligence has prevented the guests from dancing at Aytoun to-night. With the thought comes the old distrust, for she says abruptly, "You have not told me yet what Gerald Alston meant by keeping every one from Aytoun to-night."

"How can I tell you what I do not know?" answers Philip shortly.

"It was something he told the men about a debt of honor, as he called it."

Philip's face darkens: "That throws no light on it. Alston and I may have very different ideas of honor." Then he adds, more lightly: "You must ask Alston himself if you want to know what he means."

"So I did," Grace answers, simply.

"You did?" Philip sneers. "I like your confidence in me, it is so pretty and tender. What did your friend tell you to my discredit?"

"Nothing very definite," she confesses.

"Then you may safely argue there is nothing to tell. Alston would out with his gossip if he had really anything to go on."

"I mean, he would not enter into any particulars. And yet what he said has kept our party from going to Aytoun to-night."

"You can't hold me to account for what Alston only hints. He may, by an innuendo, keep a parcel of silly people from a little wholesome amusement, but I can't plead guilty or not guilty when there is no charge made against me."

"But you do know, you must know, what he means," says Grace impatiently, growing uneasy at Philip's mode of fencing off her blows.

"I tell you I do not, and you seem to doubt my word. Grace, how can you be so unreasonable?"

"I am not unreasonable," Grace says hotly. "I have no one to look out for me or to advise me, so I must be doubly careful. Until this disagreeable rumor is cleared up I cannot think of consenting to your request."

"Which request?" asks Philip with an angry gleam in his eye—"yesterday's or to-day's?"

"To-day's," answers Grace quickly. She does not care to let her pleasant bargain slip through her fingers if she can possibly help it, and yet she will not be hasty and imprudent. Just now Gerald Alston spoke only vague, unproven words, and Philip Dunbar and Aytoun are palpable and within her reach. So she would willingly temporize a while.

"Then," says Philip, rising from the sofa where he has been sitting by her side, "you must pardon me if I tell you I do not fancy the rôle you would have me play. Engaged to you, and yet mistrusted; having the first right in your house, and yet hardly spoken to by your guests; Gerald Alston pouring into your ears what slanders he pleases, and you heeding them and taxing me with them."

"I did not let him tell them to me," Grace cries quickly: "I was very angry with him. Only I see no harm in asking you to explain them."

"No harm in insulting me, and letting your friends follow your lead! We might as well understand each other at once. I will not visit you, as Gerald Alston and your Bridgeford admirers do."

Grace looks surprised. She has had always docile, obedient lovers—never one to deal with like Philip Dunbar. Perhaps the novelty is not unpleasing.

"Do you intend to give up visiting here?" she asks.

"You appear weary of our engagement of twenty-four hours' standing, and seem willing to drop me," he answers. "Otherwise, you would not care to fill your room with these people when I come."

"But how could I tell you were coming?—you gave me no warning."

"I suppose it is not an unexpected visit this morning. At least, you might have some cause for censuring me if I had not come. But until you can make some arrangement by which I shall not stumble in upon all your acquaintance, I will stay at home."

Grace has half a mind to tell Philip she will arrange her own visiting-hours, and then she cools down a little, and thinks of telling him he can come when

he pleases and find the parlors empty. Halting between two such opposite speeches, she says nothing at all, but lets him go, feeling that the quarrel is not a hopeless one, and that either can heal the breach if disposed to do so.

Philip's ill-humor is not so great as it appears to be. He is playing for two important points, and he thinks he has won one of them at least. A long engagement would be a folly on his part, and he is determined not to meet Grace's Bridgeford acquaintances just now. He is quite sure he will not again find them in his way.

But he grows more ill-humored as he walks down the street for his horse. Several of his own acquaintances look diligently into the shop-windows, thereby turning their backs upon him. Others are in too great haste to do more than nod as they pass him.

"Confound them!" he mutters. "There is not one of them whose father would not have held my grandfather's horses for a shilling. I wonder if they think I care for their insolence?"

Bryan Bonham is coming down the street as Philip mounts for his ride home. "You are just the one I want to see," Philip calls out to him. "Miss Robson tells me the ladies will not dance at Aytoun to-night. Either yesterday's ride was too much for them, or they don't feel like dancing. Hortense will be disappointed, I fear; but I thought I would tell you, to save you the trouble of coming out."

Bryan looks annoyed. "I can't imagine what it means," he says. "I thought it was a fixed fact we were to go to you to-night."

"Nothing is fixed in this world," Philip says lightly—"especially the mind of a woman."

And he leaves Bryan not so much annoyed that there is no dance to-night—for the gates of Aytoun always stand open to him—as at the sudden change which has come over the Bridgeford people, who are always eager for a dance in the old hall. There is some reason, and he is determined to fathom the mystery.

"There is no party to-night, Hortense," Philip says to his sister a half hour later. "You have gathered your roses for nothing, for the Bridgeford folks are out of dancing humor, and they have declined to come, *en masse*."

"What is the matter with them?" asks Hortense in surprise, never having been disappointed in her guests before.

"Ask Gerald Alston. It seems to be of his devising," answers Philip indifferently.

"One likes to ask questions of gentlemen!" replies Hortense curtly. And then she consoles herself for no dancing to-night with the hope of seeing Bryan. She can tell him her tidings just as well under the gas-light in the library as in treading the measure of a dance.

But she is doomed to another disappointment, for Bryan does not come: why, she cannot tell.

CHAPTER III.

Ever so many flashes of lightning do not make daylight.

PHILIP has kept his word. He has made no more visits to Grace; and as for the town of Bridgeford, nothing would induce him to walk down its principal street again. In the seclusion of Aytoun he cares very little for any strictures the manufacturing people may make upon his conduct. Even Grace may hold a court of inquiry in her showy drawing-room daily if she pleases, and so that he does not happen in inopportunistly, it does not matter to him.

What people think of him is of but small importance to Philip Dunbar: how they behave to him is of much more consequence. If his Bridgeford acquaintances had had a civil good-morning for him, they might have gossiped, and abused him as they chose, and he would have only laughed at them for their pains. But the walk from Grace Robson's house to the livery-stable has cured him of any desire to go to the town again.

Then Grace Robson's pretty face and long stock-list are nothing to him? They

are a good deal to him, especially the latter item. But having woven his web, he can afford, cunning spider as he thinks himself, to let the silly fly entangle herself. Perhaps he would not take it all so coolly if he had not Hortense to serve him in an emergency—Hortense, who would not willingly move her finger to help him in his mercenary expedients, and who shares his contempt for mills and spinners.

It is four days now since Philip's visit to Grace—four days since the Bridgeford people refused Hortense's invitation. Philip has been moody and out of temper all the while. Some quarrel between Grace and himself, Hortense thinks, having occasionally had some such experience herself during her two years' engagement with Bryan. And she has no doubt, from the same experience, that there will be a making up of the difficulty soon.

Philip must be harder to manage, though, for Bryan never kept away from Aytoun for four days—at least, never until now—and Philip, to her knowledge, had not set foot out of Aytoun all this time. As for Bryan, she does not know whether his absence is accidental or not, but she has no intention of noticing it. If he is still offended at the result of his grandfather's epistolary efforts, she will be able to set that matter right, now that Philip does not need her much longer.

The truth about Philip is, he has been waiting for a message from Grace every hour for three days at least. He did not think he had left her feeling very resentfully toward him, and so he has been expecting a summons; and now he is uneasy at not receiving it. If he had seen how frequently Gerald Alston visited Grace, he would have understood the state of things better. As it is, he is waxing impatient.

"Hortense, are you going to Bridgeford this morning?" Philip asks as he is leaving the breakfast-table on the fourth day of his uncertainty.

"I did not intend to go, but I can if you want anything," Hortense replies, unsuspecting of any lurking idea in

Philip's mind of making a cat's-paw of her.

"I wish you would, then, if you do not mind it. There is some money due me at Lancaster's. It isn't a very common thing with me now-a-days."

"Why can't you go yourself?" Hortense asks. "I am so stupid about money-matters. I always get into a rage with myself for having to listen to explanations I ought to comprehend at once, and which I never manage to understand at all."

"There is nothing for you to understand. It is Lancaster's business, as he is paid for it. I can't go to Bridgeford this morning, for Hill wants me in the five-acre field."

"I must, then, I suppose, if Hill needs you," Hortense says, not much caring to execute his commission.

"And, Hortense, if you would call on Grace, it would only be civil in you, as she is to be your sister, and I have told her you knew of it. Do say something pretty to her, as you can if you choose, and ask her to come and see you. Perhaps she would like to see the house. Can't you ask her to come to-morrow?" inquires Philip, lighting his cigar as he gives his instructions.

"Oh, that is what you want?" Hortense answers dryly. "I am to draw on the bank of love as well as on your factor. Have you any special commands for the fair owner of the Blidale Mill if I make up my mind to call upon her?"

"You can drop the mill, if you please," says Philip shortly.

"Any message for Miss Grace Robson?" Hortense asks, correcting herself as desired.

"None. I don't care for you to mention my name even. The visit is strictly on your own account, remember."

"Is it? It is a pity you had to prompt it, then."

"You had better go early, or Lancaster may be out," suggests Philip.

"Has any change been made in the business-hours at Bridgeford lately?" asks Hortense. "I will start soon, though, for I do not care to call at

Grace's when there is any chance of meeting visitors. I suppose she will not mind seeing me early, as I am Hortense Dunbar, sister to Philip."

Philip in his heart hopes Hortense will be too early to meet any of Grace's friends, for he is not at all sure how his sister will bear any rudeness if they should chance to treat her as they had treated him. But he says nothing to warn her, and saunters out to the five-acre field to talk with Hill about crops and manures.

Hortense dawdles a little longer over the breakfast-table, and then goes to dress for her visit, for that is the real business she has to do this morning.

The day is so bright and sunshiny she concludes to walk to Bridgeford. She likes the exercise, and she dislikes driving by herself in a close carriage. Certainly the fresh October air has given her a color, and she looks more than pretty as she stands on Grace Robson's doorsteps with her hand on the bell.

Hortense dearly loves her brother Philip, the only one she had to love before she knew Bryan Bonham. Most girls have mothers and fathers and sisters to lavish their first fresh love upon. But Hortense remembers but the one tie of blood, and she is not cold-hearted enough to meet Philip's betrothed without a little flutter and excitement.

She has determined to be very cordial to Grace. Certainly, if Philip loves her, Hortense can have no fault to find with her. And yet—alas for the perversity of womankind!—she finds herself continually seeing faults.

"One ought to dress like the pictures in a fashion-plate to be in keeping here," Hortense thinks as the servant shows her into the long, showy drawing-room. "I feel extinguished in my plain black silk, surrounded by so much gilt and red velvet. Ah, poor Aytoun! the Blidale Mill money will regild you until your best friends will not know you. I don't believe the new paint will stay on your walls, though." And so she comforts herself.

There is a rustle of silks, a dainty vision of ruffles and furbelows, and

Grace Robson stands before her future sister-in-law.

"Have you been expecting me?" Hortense asks. "I thought I would give you breathing-time, but Philip sent me this morning. I suppose we may kiss in a sisterly fashion."

"Mr. Dunbar sent you?" Grace repeats.

"Yes. I should hardly have ventured to call at this hour if he had not sent me. I wanted to see you before visitors came, though."

"Is Mr. Dunbar in town?" asks Grace, her curiosity getting the better of her pride.

"No: he had some business—something urgent, I suppose, as he has sent me to Mr. Lancaster's, instead of going himself." Hortense thinks some excuse must be made for her delinquent brother. "But I would not have let him come with me, even if he could have done so, as I want to have you to myself a little while."

"I am glad to see you," Grace says heartily, carried away, as most are to whom Hortense is at all cordial.

"Thank you," replies Hortense. "I hope you will always be glad to have me. You know I have no sister, so I ought to be very much obliged to Philip for kindly holding out the hope that I shall have one some day. I hope it will not be very long, either."

She ought to be glad, yet Hortense cannot say from her heart that she is.

"And I have neither brother nor sister," says Grace, a little sadly.

"Then you have missed one torment in a brother. I am afraid you will spoil Philip, though, if you have had no brother to break your hand in a little."

"Mr. Dunbar will take his own way, I imagine." Grace is still piqued at the remembrance of their last interview.

"He comes of an obstinate race, and is sadly spoiled," Hortense replies. And then she lays her hand on Grace's shoulder, and says softly, "Make him very happy, dear. It is the best work we women can do, to keep a bright, cheerful home for those we love."

Grace is surprised at the sudden

change in Hortense's manner, but warms under it as she says, "I will try, I promise you."

Just then the door-bell rings loudly and fiercely, as if to give warning to the whole house of the arrival of a visitor. Hortense rises at once. "I do not want to be caught," she says. "I hoped I was too early for visitors. Cannot you come to see me? Promise me to come to-morrow. We shall be safe from interruption at Aytoun, and Philip is anxious for me to show you the house. You will come?"

Grace has no excuse: perhaps she is glad to receive the invitation; and so she promises.

"To-morrow, then, I will expect you;" and the two girls kiss and part as if they were already sisters.

"She is very pretty, and I think sweet-tempered. At least, she has forgotten her quarrel with Philip, or forgiven him at the first overture. She is lady-like too, in spite of her taste for finery," Hortense says to herself as she goes down stairs to the hall door.

The servant is just opening it to the visitor who gave such a noisy summons. "Mr. Alston," Hortense says coldly as she bows a little stiffly in passing him.

Gerald starts at the sight of her, and forgets to be civil enough to return the bow, for she is the last person in the world he cares to meet visiting Grace, except Philip himself.

Hortense draws a long breath when she is once more in the street. "I am glad I have but the one brother," she thinks. "I wonder if Jacob's daughters had to make such visits of ceremony when their twelve brothers were betrothed? But of course they did not: such affairs were better managed in those days. One cannot help longing to wear a veil and be a nonentity. To think of one's thoughts being answered in that way!" and Hortense laughs a silvery little laugh, which causes a small child who has escaped out of a house near by, and is playing in the forbidden gutter, to look up and laugh too.

It was not much for either to laugh at.

Only one of Hortense's acquaintances had passed her with a blank look of non-recognition. It never struck Hortense that this was intentional—for she knew of no reason why any one should ignore her—or perhaps she would not have been so much amused. But she is at Mr. Lancaster's door now, and has quite forgotten her merriment.

"Philip is busy, Mr. Lancaster," Hortense says, "and has sent me for some money. Please do not give me a message to understand: I can learn it by rote if it is necessary."

"I wish you would understand your brother's business," Mr. Lancaster says, looking down on the bright face he loves, as all do who know it well. "You might do a great deal of good if you would only try to enter into his concerns."

"Is Philip extravagant?" asks Hortense.

"He is embarrassed, and, I fear, reckless," Mr. Lancaster answers gravely.

"The poor boy has had a bad bringing-up so far as economy is concerned," Hortense says, by way of excusing Philip. "But I cannot think there is very much extravagance at Aytoun," she adds, remembering how differently the place must have been kept up in the days of her forefathers.

"There is bad management somewhere," Mr. Lancaster says, "for there are more notes due than there is money to meet them with. Perhaps a word from you may be useful. You have always had influence with Philip."

"Not in important matters. But why not speak to him yourself? He has confidence in your judgment," she urges.

"I have said as much and as strongly as I dare, without any effect. But if you will only watch and see for yourself, you may do some good."

"I will, if you think I ought," Hortense promises, little dreaming to what this watching will bring her.

Mr. Lancaster has a keener vision into the future, and he feels some compunction as he looks at her standing there putting the money he has given her carelessly into her purse, without glancing at it to see if the sum is right.

Then she holds out her hand to bid him good-bye, and he takes it in a lingering, pitying way, which surprises Hortense and makes her uneasy, fearing Mr. Lancaster sees more trouble ahead than he cares to tell her of. His warning has brought a grave expression into her eyes, which those who know her best have seldom seen there.

Now, the whole of Bridgeford might pass her without speaking and she would never perceive it, for she is looking straight before her with a little frown on her brow. She is planning retrenchments, and has lessened every expense at Aytoun, from the stables to the kitchen-department. So there is a likelihood of starvation and cobwebs in old Aytoun under the new régime Hortense is preparing.

She is so absorbed in her calculations that she never hears a footstep which is hastening to overtake her—never heeds it until Bryan, panting somewhat from his exertions, comes up. "What are you in such a hurry for?" he asks. "I have been trying to join you ever since you left Lancaster's."

"Have you? I had not an idea I was walking fast. I suppose I was trying to keep pace with my thoughts."

"I should like to know what your thoughts were about," Bryan says, thinking of course he has some part in them.

But Hortense is not going to tell tales on Philip, especially as she knows nothing from her own observation. So she turns the conversation a little abruptly, and inquires, "By the way, Bryan, have you your grandfather's letter with you? You know you promised to show it to me."

"I don't remember doing so, but I should like to talk to you about it."

She does not answer, leading Bryan to infer that she is still refractory, so he says decidedly, "You may as well take my arm, for you cannot possibly get away from me, and you will be obliged to hear what I have to say."

They are on the road now, under the linden trees, which, though they strive to wear a brave look, yet cannot help showing marks of the battle they have

had with the frost, to which before many days they will have to succumb. How many hopes may die before the next spring decks the trees again, Hortense cannot foretell; and Bryan is not thinking of them, but says reproachfully, "Why would you not listen to me the other day? Why are you at times so difficult to understand?"

"Because I had only an ungracious No to give you. I dislike the spiteful little monosyllable, and will never use it if I can decently get round it."

"That is right," rejoins Bryan heartily. "There is no word so unbecoming to rosy lips. Let us have a Yes always."

"I dislike hearing the word as much as I do saying it, so let us have only affirmations."

"It is a bargain, then," Bryan says. "You will listen to me patiently, no matter how long I talk?"

"Yes," Hortense replies, obediently.

"And will let me name the wedding-day?"

"Yes."

"Even if I say just after Christmas?"

"Yes."

"And you will give up Niagara?"

"Yes."

"You certainly mean what you promise?" asks Bryan, looking at her doubtfully.

"Are you longing for a dissent? You have not been at Aytoun for nearly a week, so you do not know I am to abdicate."

"To do what?"

"I have been to Bridgeford this morning to see the future mistress of Aytoun," Hortense says, trying to make herself understood.

"And who may she be?" he inquires, not yet quite taking in the drift of this bit of information.

"Grace Robson is the happy woman," Hortense answers.

"Is Philip thinking of selling?" asks Bryan, knowing Grace can very well pay a good price for the old place if she chooses to buy.

"Hardly. He will be a beggar before Aytoun is sold, I hope. This is a matri-

monial transaction, not a monetary one. I have been calling on my future sister-in-law this morning."

"When was it decided upon, Hortense?"

"It was one of the fruits of the ride to the Rapids. It is odd how some quarrel and some make love under the same sun."

"Are you sure it is so?" questions Bryan. "May not Philip be quizzing you? Gerald Alston told me that it was at Grace Robson's house the decision was made not to go to Aytoun the other night. She would hardly have allowed it if she is engaged to Philip."

"Mr. Alston's story is not altogether likely, as Philip has sent me to call on Grace to-day, and she received my congratulations as a modest maiden should. You may believe the Alston story if you can."

"Philip is lucky," Bryan remarks. "He has chosen the prettiest and the richest girl in Bridgeford."

"Is that your idea of luck? You ought to have looked out for Grace yourself, if only luck was to have won her."

"I don't need money as much as Philip does," Bryan answers.

That reminds Hortense of what Mr. Lancaster had said to her, and her face wears the same grave look it had when Bryan overtook her. But she says nothing of her fears and anxiety. Bryan would be more apt to find fault with Philip than to sympathize with her.

"If Philip is to be married, there is no stumbling-block in my way, I suppose. I do not see why we should wait until after Christmas."

"Only we must know what Philip's plans are before we quite decide on our own."

"Always Philip! Am I never to be first with you?"

"Yes, some day, of course. But it seems only just that I should have the poor fellow's comfort a little longer in my thoughts. Grace may not like as short an engagement as Philip wants to make it. We can see what her plans are, and then we can easily form ours."

"She might as well know what ours

are, and then form her own," Bryan suggests.

But Hortense thinks this is quite out of the question, and that she, as Philip's sister, cannot hasten matters. And Bryan does not demur at last, for he is confident that Philip will not have a long engagement if he can possibly avoid it.

"I shall be glad to get you to myself," Bryan says. "I have played second fiddle so long to Philip—two years now—I am rather weary of it."

"It is good for you," replies Hortense. "I have spoiled Philip, and I have no idea of having two of you on my conscience. And as to the secondary part you complain of taking, I am sure that until four days ago you were not able to insist upon having your own way, and you have now bravely atoned for your patience of two years' standing."

They have come to the iron gate of Aytoun now, and Bryan stops there, as if he has reached his goal.

"Are you not coming in?" asks Hortense. "There is Philip: he will be glad to see you. He has not been off the place for days."

Seeing Philip does not decide Bryan to go in, even though Hortense has pleaded his voluntary banishment. Bryan

has to go home and do some writing: at least he says so.

"To your grandfather?" Hortense asks.

"Yes: now that I have something definite to tell him, it is worth while to write."

"Don't ask him to the wedding until the day is fixed. It is the worst of luck," she asserts.

There is a little longer waiting at the gate, a little more chatting under the bright October sun, though nothing is said worth repeating. Talking nonsense must be a pleasant pastime, for Hortense joins Philip on the porch with a brighter face than the mere walk to Bridgeford would ever have given her.

She has forgotten Mr. Lancaster's grave warning—forgotten that Aytoun is no longer popular with the Bridgeford people. She forgets, too, to marvel why Bryan has suddenly found so little time to come to Aytoun.

It is well for us that at times we have such a flood of sunshine that there appears no dark corner of our lives which is not for the moment lighted up. The glory is ephemeral, and therefore seems the brighter.



PART III.

CHAPTER IV.

"Will you walk into my parlor?" says the spider to the fly:

"'Tis the prettiest little parlor that ever you did spy.
The way into my parlor is up a winding stair,
And I have many pretty things to show you when
you're there."

IT is not until Hortense ought to be quietly sleeping that the day's events are recalled by her. Her visit to Grace she remembers carelessly. She had never seen Grace looking prettier. Perhaps the novelty of her situation had given her a color, and had thrown more expression into her statue-like face.

Grace was cordial enough, and Hortense has no doubt that Philip will, after a fashion, be happy. And having reached this conclusion, she is ready to fall asleep with only a little sigh over Philip's having chosen a wife at all, when—why she does not know—Mr. Lancaster's caution comes into her thoughts, and rouses her into broad wakefulness, keeping her eyes wide open until the birds twitter in the early dawn, in a vexing way.

What could Mr. Lancaster have meant by his grave words? They come back to her tormentingly, because she does not fully understand them. "More notes due than there is money to meet them," he had said. Had this been the reason for the hasty love-making and engagement? Is Philip marrying the girl for her money? No: Hortense will not believe it. There may be some pecuniary troubles. Philip may have to take matters into his own hands, and work as never a Dunbar has had to work before. She will economize and manage—put off her own wedding, which she has just promised Bryan shall take place after Christmas. She will use her own small fortune to aid Philip, but Grace Robson must give no help in their difficulties. She must live on in her showy house in Bridgeford until money is more plentiful at Aytoun, and come to the old home not when the clouds hang over it, but in the full sunshine.

Presently recurs the recollection of what Bryan had told her concerning the decision made in Grace's drawing-room. She wonders if Gerald Alston had any foundation for his story. If it was discussed whether there should be a wholesale refusal, there must have been some reason, and Grace must have been privy to it. And yet if there had been anything intentionally rude, would Grace have allowed it to be talked over in her house, she standing in the connection she did to Philip?

That there had been some quarrel between Philip and Grace she is sure. For Philip has not been to Bridgeford since the day he told his sister her roses were all wasted. But then, again, he had sent her to see Grace, and Grace on her part had been cordial, and had promised to return the visit the next day.

Hortense is puzzled, and inclined to blame Grace as not altogether loyal to Philip. And she falls asleep and dreams that the house is on fire, and Philip has stolen Blidale Mill from Grace, and Bryan is angry, and Gerald Alston jeers at her.

But life is not so worrying by daylight as it is in the darkness of night, and Hortense is not so perplexed after her uncomfortable sleep as she was in her watch. One thing she has determined upon—and that is, to have a talk with Philip, and to discover if Mr. Lancaster's fears have any foundation.

There is not a particle of cowardice in her composition, so she begins her onslaught upon Philip at the breakfast-table, without any preliminary manœuvring. "Philip," she says, behind the coffee-urn, "Mr. Lancaster was warning me yesterday that money is rather tight—is that the expression?—with you."

"Was he?" Philip answers carelessly. "I should think you are astute enough yourself to see, without Lancaster's hint, that I do not run the Bank of England."

"If money is not plentiful, we can easily draw in. No doubt we are living too extravagantly. I have been thinking it over, and we can make a reformation in every department."

"I don't see much extravagance," Philip says. "We live barely as genteel people should, and in a style our grandfathers would have called poverty-stricken."

"But you are not so rich as they were, thanks to their spendthrift ways, and we ought to come down a little. I don't care at all for the carriage, so you can put it down, and all the horses, except King Harold, can be sold; I can dismiss most of the servants, and take the management of the house more into my own hands; and—"

"And waste more from your inexperience than the servants ever did," Philip interrupts her to say. "I think—thank you all the same for your offer—that things had better stand as they do now. I have, I acknowledge, some money-difficulties, but they do not worry me over-much, as I see my way plainly out of them."

"But until you are out of them we had better economize. I can do wonders with the housekeeping, I am sure, if you will let me send away most of the servants," Hortense urges.

"There is not the least use in making any changes yet," Philip replies. "Grace will make some, I suppose, when she is mistress. I would prefer she should take possession of the old home just as it is. She may like it better."

Hortense winces a little, notwithstanding her cheerfully-paid visit of yesterday, and her philosophical decision that Grace will make a very nice wife for Philip. To know that Aytoun is to pass entirely out of her keeping and management, and that the old ways and customs must necessarily pass away also, gives a little inevitable pain. "Philip," she asks boldly, after a few minutes' silence, "is it Grace Robson's money you expect to use to help you out of your difficulties?"

Philip pauses as he is in the act of breaking an egg. Perhaps he cannot decide quite to confess the truth fully to

Hortense; for though he does hector her a good deal, still he has a certain respect for her good opinion, and knows from experience that she is very downright and uncompromising where she sees simple right and wrong. So he breaks his egg very deliberately before he answers her question. "I suppose Grace will have no objection to free the old place of some of its encumbrances," he says at last, thinking it is better to tell part of the truth at least.

"And it is your love for Aytoun, not for Grace Robson, which has made you such an eager lover?"

"I do not object to Grace's being rich and able to put the old place out of debt, as I confess myself fond of it," replies Philip. "I can't say I am perfectly indifferent to Grace, though. If she were old and ugly and disagreeable, I am sure I shouldn't be, as you say, an eager lover."

"But if she had not a penny in the world you would wish to marry her just the same?" asks Hortense.

"I can't say. But I do know if Grace was poor she would never care to marry me."

"I should imagine you would be a good match for her under any circumstances."

"Grace is not a girl who would like to share a man's penury," Philip answers coolly. "Aytoun is a fine old home, but I doubt if she would fancy figuring out necessary retrenchments for my good, or Aytoun's either, as you evidently have been doing."

"Do you mean that with her eyes open she is willing to be taken instead of a mortgage on Aytoun?" asks Hortense.

Philip finishes his egg without a word. Somehow, he in his turn winces under Hortense's speech. But he answers presently: "Grace has her ambition, and it is to be mistress of Aytoun. And as she is pretty, and will do credit to the old place, I am not the one to quarrel with her whims."

"How humble we are!" says Hortense with a laugh, looking across the table at Philip, and thinking his handsome eyes have more to do with Grace's predilection than Aytoun has. "I should not

think you could tolerate being married for the sake of your place, any more than Grace could for her money."

"People don't manage these things in such a cold-blooded way as your words imply. Of course, Grace and I are in love with each other, and we are fortunate in our worldly concerns dovetailing together as well as our heart-affairs."

"Are you so very sure of Grace? Bryan told me an odd thing yesterday."

"Bryan! Has Bryan Bonham been here?"

"No: he walked home with me from Bridgeford last evening, and could not come in. Did you know the wholesale refusal to our party last Thursday was a concerted thing? and that there was a consultation at Grace Robson's?"

This is no news to Philip, and no one understands the reason of the slight put upon Hortense better than he does. He does not confess his superior knowledge, but asks with a sneer, "Was Bryan one of the cabal?"

"Hardly!" answers Hortense scornfully.

"How, then, can he report what was done in Grace's drawing-room?" asks Philip.

"Mr. Alston was there, and told him about it," answers Hortense innocently.

"You must keep an eye on your own traitor, then," says Philip, rising to leave the room. "Our engagement is not known yet, and I suppose Grace has had to go through the ordeal of hearing the Bridgeford spinners' impertinence without wincing. I have heard women are brave under such trials. But your engagement is as well known in the town as the price of gold. I only wonder Bryan did not knock Gerald Alston down in repayment of his bit of gossip."

Hortense wonders he did not, too, and is very glad Philip has walked away and left her alone in her discomfiture.

As there is to be no dismissing of servants, no beginning of retrenchments to-day, Hortense can spend her morning as she chooses. Bryan might have sat for hours and told of his exploits, and his Desdemona would not have found that "still the house-affairs would draw her

thence." And Hortense is as eager to see Bryan as ever poor love-stricken Desdemona was to hear Othello's exploits. She is eager to ask him why Aytoun is no longer the haven of his desires, and why she is bound to receive in silence Philip's sarcasm.

Sitting still and wishing never brought a knight to his lady yet: the "girls of the period" have discovered that. Hortense grows impatient of waiting in vain, and weary of her own thoughts; so she catches up her hat and starts off for a walk. She has quite forgotten she is expecting a visit from Grace this morning. Otherwise she would have told the servants to look for her when the visitor arrives, for she does not intend to leave the lawn.

A half hour later, Grace, in the prettiest of fall hats, is spinning along in her carriage over the turnpike to Aytoun. She hardly knows whether she is wise in coming, or not, for Philip has kept his word, and has not been to her house since his somewhat stormy visit. And then there are more reports in Bridgeford of his shortcomings, and Gerald Alston is kind enough to keep her informed of all of them.

Grace has not had the spirit to silence him by avowing her engagement. She is at times afraid of Gerald, who can say bitter things on provocation; nor does she feel quite guiltless when he taunts her. For before Philip Dunbar showed his handsome face in her drawing-room, Gerald had been chief favorite, partly because he is the son of her quondam guardian, and, until lately, because she liked him better than any of her admirers.

These rumors Gerald is so fond of repeating are all of Philip's private affairs, his embarrassments and makeshifts; and, though they always have a disagreeable ring to them, Grace knows very well if she marries Philip they would take to themselves wings, and she is shrewd enough to be sure they would soon be forgotten.

Yet, for all this, Grace is a little afraid to meet Philip. She is glad there is a sister in the house she can fall back

upon if she would avoid a tête-à-tête. She is glad of the opportunity of going to Aytoun, for heretofore she has only been there as a formal guest or as one of a large party. Now she hopes to take a quiet survey of all the surroundings.

Grace will never have her coveted look at Aytoun if Hortense is her only reliance, for Hortense is quite out of sight and hearing. But Philip is on the lookout for the carriage, and appears just as it stops. He throws away his cigar, and comes forward, as in duty bound, to help his betrothed to alight.

"Is Hortense at home?" asks Grace, a little taken aback by the prompt appearance of her lover.

"Yes, certainly: she is expecting you," answers Philip, hoping, however, in his heart that Hortense is safely out of the way, as he wishes to have a few private words with Grace.

He leads her not into the drawing-rooms, where Hortense generally receives her formal visitors, and with them Grace, but into the far more sociable library, where are the family pictures, for which Aytoun is quite famous. She has never seen them till now, so she drops into the first chair and takes a survey.

Philip must see the inspection she is making, for he says something about the rooms being "confoundedly dark," and opens the shutters so as to let in a flood of sunshine.

"Oh, how beautiful they are!" exclaims Grace.

And Philip asks, "Who are so beautiful?" being at a loss to know whether the admiration is expressed for his grandmothers, or for Psyche and Hebe, who, winged and wingless, fill the recesses in the room.

"Those dresses," is Grace's rather feminine remark. "I never saw anything more lovely. One can see the gloss on the satin of that dark-looking lady's dress, and the lace of the one next her is perfect. Spanish point," she adds decidedly.

"Oh, the dresses are your admiration!" Philip returns with a twinkle in his eye. "It reminds one of the artificial flowers

the queen of Sheba had, or Solomon had, or somebody had, which were so natural that only the bees could discover they were counterfeits."

Grace has never heard before of the Jewish legend, and perhaps Philip's version of it is not very clear. But she feels that she cannot be compared to a bee either for sagacity or industry, neither of these being her strong point; and she has no idea who the queen of Sheba was.

"Some of these faces are handsome," Philip says, finding he has not made much impression by his illustration.

"Very," replies Grace, taking the opportunity thus given to look around her. "What a number you have! Are they all of your own family?"

"They are all Dunbars, either by blood or marriage. But," he continues smiling, "I hope to add the prettiest face of all to them."

Grace blushes, but her heart beats pleasantly at the thought of her portrait hanging amongst these fine ladies, who, she does not doubt, wore their brave clothes in kings' courts and palaces.

"Have you a picture of Hortense?" she asks after a pause.

"Yes, a very good one. But Hortense does not care to see herself displayed in state amongst her dead kindred, and so she hangs in my special room where I smoke."

"You must be very fond of her," Grace says with just a twinge of jealousy.

"Of course I am;" and then he remembers that Hortense may come in upon them, and, taking the conversation into his own hands, he asks in rather a tender tone, "Have you thought hardly of my not coming to Bridgeford, Grace?"

She starts a little, though she answers quickly, "There was no use in thinking about it. You told me you would not come;" and then she adds, rather pettishly, "There are so many ill-natured things said about you, I should think it would be pleasanter for you to be out of town."

"Are the good spinners worrying themselves about my doings?" asks Philip

with a laugh. Then, remembering it is bad taste to abuse the bridge which carries you over, he adds, "I suppose you too blame me, Grace. Yet I cannot feel anything but amusement at the foolish stories the Bridgeford people try to blacken my character with."

Philip forgets that though he can laugh at them at Aytoun, he felt little disposed to hilarity when last in the streets of Bridgeford.

"I wish you would do something else than laugh at them," says Grace angrily. "It is dreadfully trying to hear such stories, and find you take no trouble whatever to contradict them."

"What do they say?" asks Philip, by no means knowing how much his affairs are the town's talk.

"They say you have mortgaged Aytoun, and cannot pay the interest on it; that your note has been protested more than once; that you ignore your debts of honor; and that you have spent every cent of your sister's money."

"Anything else?" he inquires with a shrug.

"I should think that is enough," answers Grace.

"And you want me to contradict these falsehoods?" asks Philip; for, having found one in the list, he thinks he may as well make it plural. "Hortense will tell you, if you will ask her, that I cannot touch her money even if I would, and Heaven knows I would not, no matter how much I needed it. Tell me the truth, Grace: is it not Gerald Alston who tells you these sweet little fables?"

Grace does not answer him, but he reads the confession in her face.

"Can't you see it is all his malice? I acknowledge I am somewhat embarrassed. It is the penalty paid for inheriting landed property. The follies as well as sins of the fathers are visited on the third and fourth generation. But I am not embarrassed to the extent Alston would make you believe. Confound the fellow's jealousy! why does he not keep a truthful tongue in his head? And yet I do not altogether blame him," Philip says softly. "If he had got ahead of me with you, I would

promise not to malign him—that seems a weapon fit only for old women—but I would not promise not—"

"To do what?" asks Grace.

"Not to shoot him."

"You would do nothing so wicked," Grace says, yet a little pleased at the bloody threat.

"Do not try me, then, or I may be as good as my word."

"But if they do tell falsehoods about you," she resumes, going back to the real point of discussion, "it does not make it a less trial to me to hear all that they say."

"I know it is hard on you, my poor child, but that is because we are not in the right position toward each other. Our engagement not being known, of course your acquaintances do not dream they hurt you when they retail their scandal in your hearing."

Grace is not so sure that if their engagement is announced it will not make more scandal and gossip, instead of lessening it, and she says so. And Philip agrees with her, but adds: "There is a simple way out of all this trouble—only it may seem a little ungenerous in me to urge it, if the Bridgeford people are gossiping about me. Yet if you will hasten the wedding-day, Grace, and surprise the good people with the wedding-cards, I think you will stop their talking. Your friends will be as anxious for your invitations when you are mistress of Aytoun as they are now."

He does not say "more anxious," though he means perhaps to imply this.

"You men talk of a wedding as if it were the simplest thing in the world," Grace says pettishly. "I wish you had all the trouble and thinking about it. I am sure I do not wonder that all brides are pale and weary-looking. The man has only to pull on his gloves and walk into church. And I have no one to advise me but Aunt Charlotte, and she is so wonderfully helpless."

"No matter about the dresses and other fine things," Philip says persuasively. "I will be like the prince in the fairy tale, and will take my Cinderella just as she is."

His Cinderella is in the latest style, and she glances down complacently, having no rags to blush for. She is sitting in the very haven of her desires, and Philip is pleading for a quick realization of all her longings—Philip, who is looking so handsome as he pleads.

To be sure, between her and Aytoun there are some disagreeable reports which before she came here made her feel anxious and suspicious—suspicious that Philip's love-making was not all for her, but partly for her money. And yet it is but natural that Philip should want it. And in his anxiety he is not making a fool of himself, as so many of her lovers had done.

Certainly, Philip is not making a fool of himself in his vehemence. Nobody could be cooler or more gentlemanly than he is, as he stands there leaning on the mantelpiece and looking down on Grace. He is very handsome, very earnest, but with no dash of the heroic or the melodramatic about him.

"Perhaps you are right," Grace says, caught by the glamour. "But I will not fix the day this morning, though I will promise it shall be as soon as I can manage it. I am not coming to Aytoun in Cinderella-style, my prince, seeing I have no fairy godmother; and positively I must have something fit to be seen in."

Whether Philip is content with his partial victory, or whether he will urge his wishes further, Grace cannot tell, for Hortense is standing in the open doorway.

Hortense glances at Philip to see if he is very angry with her for her forgetfulness, and she takes in at the glance that she was better away than politely present. So she attempts no apology.

There is no more love-making for to-day, only a little talk about the weather and of the Bridgeford news—what are the signs of gayety for the winter, and who are to be married. All this is soon exhausted, and then Hortense proposes to take Grace over the house.

So they leave Philip to his own thoughts, and spend an hour wandering about the old rooms, Grace talk-

ing confidentially, as girls who have no mothers or sisters at home will do. There are no secrets to be told; only some advice to ask about dress and colors, and Hortense gives her opinion calmly, as if it were not the future mistress of Aytoun who is consulting the present one.

And so the scales go down in Philip's favor, and his sending Hortense to ask Grace to visit her was a happy thought on his part. Nor is Grace sorry that she came. Her talk with Philip and the glimpse Hortense has given her of Aytoun have quite done away with the misgivings she had on the way.

CHAPTER V.

A ripple on the inner sea, which shakes
Those images that on its breast reposed,
A fold upon a wind-stayed flag, that breaks
The motto it disclosed.

THREE months have passed, and with them Christmas, and there has not been heard a wedding-peal yet. Philip has done his best to set his own ringing, but without success. Grace has grown obstinate and hard to manage, and he knows very well whose hand it is that holds her back. But Philip only curses him in his heart, never aloud.

He sees Grace daily, as a lover should, but of his movements no one in Bridgeford knows anything, no matter how much may be suspected. His horse is never seen before Grace's house, and none meet him going there, though they may surmise why the door is always closed to visitors in the evening, and may hint that Philip only comes to town under cover of the darkness.

Bryan, too, has had his disappointment, which he by no means bears as calmly as Philip appears to bear his. But there is small use in his storming and fuming. Hortense thinks she is needed at Aytoun, and she is not one to leave her post of duty if she is sure she ought to keep it.

There is a sort of Casabianca spirit in the girl which will make her heroic, even where some may question if she is not foolishly self-sacrificing. I fancy Casa-

bianca's mother would rather her darling boy had fled the deck and saved himself with the rest of the crew; and certainly Bryan would much rather that Hortense should flee from the falling house at Aytoun than stay and try with her woman's strength to prop it up.

Hortense has gained something of her own way at last. Mr. Lancaster has continued to give hints, and more of Philip's money-troubles have come to light. Undoubtedly there is a mortgage on old Aytoun, and there are debts besides. Any other rumors need not be whispered into a sister's ear.

Hortense is right in leaving Bryan in the lurch, for a time at least, for only she can manage Philip, and she has used her influence bravely. There is no need of so much stabling for the one horse Philip keeps now. The hounds no longer bay at the moon, the only music they have attempted for many a day. All the servants have been dismissed except the cook, and a maid-of-all-work, who, for love of Hortense, does her best to keep the large house in its wonted order. Hortense is managing everything in the most economical manner possible.

Philip has grown fretful and irritable under his numerous troubles, and Hortense pets him and bears with him, and entices him to fall into her plans, spending her own small income without a thought of herself. And she does all willingly and gladly, only she would fain have Bryan see her path of duty as plainly as she sees it herself.

But Bryan does not, and he grows angry with her, and comes but seldom to Aytoun, really because he is ashamed of Philip and of what is said of him, and has determined when he gets Hortense into his lawful keeping she shall see but little of her old home and of this good-for-nothing brother she loves so well.

Poor Hortense! she finds her two men hard to manage. But she is very brave, and is not much given to faltering. Only it is a pity that, between them, they have somehow robbed her of all the sparkling brightness which was once her chief

charm, and that before she is well over twenty her brow is as much clouded as most women's are at forty.

It is a cold, stormy afternoon, and Hortense has told Philip she is going to walk to Bridgeford to hand some money to Mr. Lancaster. It is her first savings, and she has been some weeks gathering it. It must be paid at once, to meet tomorrow one of Philip's unlucky notes; so he does not tell her it is too stormy for her to go out, but only that it is unfortunate she has to walk to Bridgeford in such unpleasant weather.

Philip never goes to Bridgeford himself except surreptitiously, and that not often, to see Grace; so it is not to be expected he will offer to go instead of Hortense this afternoon.

But she does not object to the storm. Indeed, she is glad to get out into the fresh air, even if the wind does blow rudely and is somewhat hard to breast. She fronts it in the same way she has learned to front her trials, with a certain steady gait which does not seem like battling, but which bears her on bravely.

There is not even a dog to be met with on the road as the young girl toils on against the wind. The streets of Bridgeford are deserted too. There would have been but small risk of Philip's meeting an acquaintance if he had chosen to undertake Hortense's errand.

The twilight has gathered early, for not only are the days nearing the shortest of the year, but the clouds have blotted out the little daylight there is, and leave in its place a dim, uncertain light not yet superseded by the street-lamps.

Hortense's road leads her past Grace Robson's house, and on the doorstep there she sees a visitor standing. It is a man, and Hortense hardly thinks of him at first, for his back is toward her. It is not easy to recognize any one in such an uncertain light. A few steps nearer, and she is very sure it is Gerald Alston waiting impatiently for the servant to open to him. Yes, it is certainly Gerald Alston.

Hortense turns suddenly round the corner into a side street, so as to avoid Grace Robson's visitor. She prefers to

walk a square farther to meeting the stare and supercilious bow which she will surely get if she continues straight on her way.

"What can Gerald Alston want with Grace?" Hortense asks herself.

He is a bird of ill-omen always to her, and she wonders if he is a frequent visitor at that house. Is Philip to be disappointed in his love? Is Grace going to prove faithless? She wonders if it would be a sore trial to Philip—whether he would feel Grace's desertion as she would Bryan's.

Hortense thinks uneasily of Bryan now-a-days; not that she doubts him, or fears any change in him, but she has that disturbed, unsatisfied feeling which we are apt to have when there are two claims upon us, and they clash. It is plain enough to her where she is most needed, but it is equally plain that Bryan is not satisfied.

She has turned into a street parallel with the one Grace Robson's residence stands in—a narrow street, with blocks of small tenement-houses on each side, most of them occupied by the operatives of Blidale Mill, which stands at the corner. They are blank, comfortless-looking houses, with nothing to mark them as homes or to make cheerful the few hours spent within their walls. Each one is but a repetition of the other: you would dare swear there is exactly the same number of bricks in each.

"What sort of lives can be spent here?" Hortense wonders. "Can the same troubles be in these walls that are at bright, cheerful Aytoun?"

Here, at least, is a different kind of one, and Hortense's step falls more lightly as her eye catches sight of a piece of black rag flapping in the wind. Here is one house veritably marked out from all others in the street—one house where the dull routine of life is stopped—stopped for a few days at least, until the corpse has been carried out—stopped for one heart for ever.

And Hortense wonders if the dead one left a broken home behind him, or whether it is some poor soul whose departure will not ruffle the smooth course

of any one's life, and whom the saddest of all fates has befallen—to die and be never missed.

She does not dwell on these thoughts long, for all the tides of life and labor are streaming out of Blidale Mill—women with loud voices and rude, boisterous ways calling out to each other, and never heeding whom they jostle in their road; children with white, old faces, looking like dwarfed men and women; and men, hard-worked and stupid-seeming, as if the din of the engine were still deafening them.

Hortense glances at them all pityingly. And it is by the labor of these Philip hopes to free the old home of its debts and encumbrances! These are the hands which are to help Aytoun back to its lost splendor and popularity.

She is glad to reach the principal street of Bridgeford—glad at last to gain Mr. Lancaster's house. Of course he is in: no one would be out in such a storm if not compelled. Yet he is not surprised to see Hortense, for he knew she would come if she possibly could.

She counts out the money quickly, and with a look of relief in her eyes, as if glad to get rid of it.

"If we were only paying off the mortgage!" Mr. Lancaster says.

"That is impossible—these bills must come first. I could never meet it, either, with my small savings. Philip has other plans for it," she adds, and blushes as she does so.

"He must mature them as fast as possible, then. Six weeks from now and it will be all up with Aytoun."

Six weeks! Hortense scarcely expected to hear the time is so very short, but she makes no reply. She has finished her business, and is in haste to return home before the darkness overtakes her utterly. She will not stay to tea nor take a glass of wine, though Mr. Lancaster presses it upon her. Neither will she allow him to send for a hack. She prefers to go as she came, and she does not mind the storm, she says.

The street-lamps are lighted now, but they flare wildly, scarcely making any impression upon the gloom. But the

stores are brilliant with gas, though they might as well be shut, for any custom they will get to-night. Grace Robson's windows are brilliantly lighted too, and Hortense wonders as she passes them whether in six short weeks Philip will realize his hopes and Aytoun will have a new mistress. She scarcely knows whether she is anxious for it or not—whether she would prefer to see the old place pass into other hands, or have it cleared from debt by Grace Robson's money.

She need not weigh the question, for she will have no part in solving it. All will go on to its inevitable end. She can hardly tell whether it is a relief to know that the whole burden of the life at Aytoun will not much longer fall on her, but that it will soon be shifted to Grace Robson's white shoulders.

With the wind at her back now, Hortense is walking rapidly toward the road, not really afraid in the gathering darkness, yet still very willing to reach the gate of Aytoun. She is only in the suburbs of Bridgeford yet, and she has a stretch of full half a mile after she reaches the road, which for the most part runs through a wood. No wonder she is walking quickly.

Perhaps she would quicken her steps even more if she knew that a man has been following her, and doing his best to catch up with her, ever since she had passed him shunning the storm in the ample doorway of the Bridgeford Bank.

Hortense does not imagine she is pursued, and it is well she does not. She would have had a needless fright, as it is Bryan's voice that calls her name. Of course she stops and waits for him.

"Is it you, Bryan?" she asks. "I did not dream of your being out such an evening as this."

"And I should not be if I had not happened to see you pass my office on your way, I suppose, to Lancaster's. I have been waiting for you at least a quarter of an hour, causing a policeman to suspect my intentions to-night."

"I wish you had not chanced to see me. I can't think of letting you walk home with me in such a storm."

"It is not a fit night for you to be out

in," Bryan says coolly, offering at the same time his arm in such a determined way that Hortense thinks it as well to take it without further remonstrance. "I wonder what Philip can be thinking about, to let you be out alone at this hour and in such weather?"

"Philip could not help it," Hortense replies, apologetically. "I had to see Mr. Lancaster, and I could not leave Aytoun until it was rather late."

"If Philip could not go himself, he might at least take care to see you properly protected. I do not fancy your going about in such a milkmaid fashion," Bryan says crossly.

"And I do not fancy being scolded for what I could not possibly help," Hortense answers, as lightly as she can to give any effect to her words.

"I am not finding fault with you, but with Philip. He knows it is not proper, and he should see to you."

This time Hortense does not answer. She hopes the fault-finding is over, and it is natural, she thinks, in Bryan to be annoyed at her being out in the twilight.

"Much as I disapprove of Philip's course," Bryan goes on to say, "I could forgive him if I did not see him use you so selfishly. You ought not to pander to his whims as you do."

"It is not Philip's fault," replies Hortense, finding she must say something to lift the burden of Bryan's displeasure off Philip's shoulders, even if she put it on her own more frail ones. "The truth is, the sensation of being really of use is very pleasurable to all women; so we are apt to spoil those who use us. It is a luxury you can hardly appreciate. And besides," she adds with a sad fall in her voice, "it is better sometimes to be kept busy. Only happy hearts can afford to sit still and listen to the rhythm of their thoughts."

"Take care, then, in your over-busy life you do not thrust out the only one who really loves you, Hortense. Philip has a stronger hold on you even now than I have ever had," says Bryan jealously.

"You need not fear. Philip wants me just now, but it will not be for very long."

"Then you must cease making yourself so necessary to him. Lancaster tells me you have twice the business head Philip has, and that he knows it and uses you accordingly."

"Mr. Lancaster says that because he is surprised to find I have any head at all; and Philip is oddly indifferent to all business. Don't think I am so very important. Grace Robson will step into the old home before very long, and I shall soon be useless to Philip, and at your service."

Hortense speaks lightly. She does not care that even Bryan should see all she shrinks from in the future.

"Do you really think Grace will marry Philip?" asks Bryan. "My opinion is, she will dilly-dally for a time, and then leave him in the lurch."

"I do not see why she should not. Philip is capable of inspiring a feeling of love in a woman. He is handsomer, too, than most men, and our sex have a weakness for beauty. And he is much more of a gentleman than any Grace has been accustomed to. She has money enough to overlook his extravagance and bad management, and he has suffered so much, poor fellow! he will not be apt to fall into them again."

Bryan looks down on Hortense, but it is much too dark for him to read her face and to see if its expression tallies with her words. He has half a mind to tell her what some of Philip Dunbar's extravagances have been. But he feels it would be cruel work—that it would be like stabbing her in the dark, when he could not read in her face how much she suffers. So he is generously silent.

"Grace Robson has more to contend with than you think," he does say, however. "She will never marry Philip if Gerald Alston can prevent her, and he will do his best."

"Gerald Alston!" Hortense exclaims, with some contempt. And then she remembers the longer walk she took this very afternoon to avoid him as he stood on Grace's steps. Hortense wonders if he has more influence with Philip's betrothed than Philip has himself. But

she puts aside the thought at once as unjust to Grace.

"We have no right to suspect Grace," Hortense says. "She is engaged to Philip, and has given no sign of change, that we know of."

"I hope she will not, then," Bryan replies heartily. "I don't feel much interest in the girl as a connection, though she will suit Philip, I dare say. To see your slavery over, your chains struck off, I acknowledge, will be a satisfaction to me."

"That you may chain me yourself. Ah, Bryan, you will be no kinder to me than you think Philip is."

"I do not know why you should say so," Bryan answers, a little angrily. "Heaven knows I have let you put Philip always before me, as that has seemed to be your wish. I think it is I who wear the chains."

"And let them weary you so, always clanking them," she says, half laughing at him.

"I can't help that. Have you anything else to complain of?"

"Only that we see so little of each other, and— We are nearly at the gate now."

There is not much connection in the sentence, simply because Hortense had broken off from what she intended to add, which was, that there was so much fault-finding on Bryan's side when they did chance to meet.

But Bryan does not seem to note any part of her speech but the implied leave-taking, for he says, "I don't intend to leave you at the gate. I will walk with you to the door. I can't cross the threshold, Hortense," he adds quickly, fearing what she may urge. "I don't approve of Philip, and I cannot be his guest. I know it is hard on you, but indeed I cannot help it, and I am kinder than you think."

Again he is on the point of telling why he will not cross Philip's doorsill. But the same compunction comes over him again, and he prefers seeming hard to being cruel.

After this they walk on quietly, Hortense not caring to urge him to give his

reasons for avoiding Philip, and Bryan feeling he has been ungracious, and that he had much better have consented to be Philip's guest than have seemed unkind to Hortense. But she gives him no chance to change his mind by a second invitation.

If Hortense believed Philip entirely blameless, she would have resented Bryan's hard judgment. As it is, she is only sorely wounded, and she will give no cry to show it. She knows more of the weakness of Philip than Bryan dreams she does. But her love is ample enough to cover up his faults and failings, and to give no hint that she sees them.

They are at the porch-steps now, and Bryan draws Hortense to him for a moment. But he fails to see that there are tears in her eyes. She stands for a moment more in the open doorway, listening to his hasty footsteps as he crunches the gravel under his heel in haste to get home out of the storm. She listens until all sound dies away, except the wind in the bare boughs of the trees, and then she goes up stairs to take off her wet wrappings.

The clock is striking seven as Hortense comes down stairs and goes into the library, where Philip is. The lamp is lit, and he is sitting at a table engrossed with some papers; not business ones, though, but dainty, lady-like notes. She does not care to disturb him, so does not ring for tea, but draws her chair up to the table he is sitting at, so as to share the light, and takes up her sewing. She has lost her happy thoughts, she told Bryan, and so has no desire to sit idle.

Philip has either forgotten her walk to Bridgeford in the storm, or he does not care to question her about it just now. Hortense has forgotten it, dwelling a little wearily on her parting with Bryan. Presently, Philip looks up from a letter and pushes it toward her. "Read that," he says, "and tell me what you think of it as a bit of composition."

Hortense takes up the letter, or rather note, and glances at it. She does not recognize the handwriting—indeed, she has never seen it before—but she knows

the cipher at the head of the page, "G. R.," so there is no need to look at the signature.

It is a tender, vapid little note—no harm in it whatever, nor sense, either, for that matter. Just such a note as some girls like to write on slight provocation, and lovers like as well to read—strong endearments and loving endings being its sum and substance.

Hortense glances over it with the pharisaical feeling of thanksgiving in her heart that Bryan has no such notes of hers to treasure, which some day might rise up and testify against her.

"Well, what do you think of the specimen?" asks Philip as she lays it down.

"I suppose it is interesting to you, but I am not much of an admirer of the style," Hortense replies.

"Here is another somewhat stronger, and another better still," Philip continues, pushing them across the table within her reach.

But Hortense has no desire to read them. They are, as she says, uninteresting to a third party—missives called forth by a quarrel or a broken promise to drive, an invitation not accepted on Philip's part, and a little pouting for his remissness. Excuse enough for writing, perhaps, but not much worth the reading.

"Of course one must value such nice, affectionate little missives," Philip says, with something very like a sneer, and not seeming to care whether Hortense reads the letters or not.

"I suppose one must," Hortense returns dryly.

"And should keep them as precious," Philip goes on to say. "Now be so kind as to read this;" and he hands a much fresher, crisper note to her.

"Is it necessary for me to read it?" asks Hortense.

"Very necessary, if you wish to understand Grace's character," answers Philip.

"I should think it would be sufficient if you understand it," Hortense says uneasily, for she remembers Bryan's words about Grace as she takes up the note to read it.

It is written in an entirely different

style from the others, rather stiff and constrained, certainly not affectionate—written in the third person, and here and there underlined where it is intended to be explicit.

Hortense does not criticise the style. She is too much astonished at the contents, for Grace speaks of her engagement with Philip being broken, and demands her letters in rather a peremptory way, promising to send back Philip's when she receives her own.

"I am not surprised that she wants possession of her silly notes," Hortense says as she finishes the letter. "I did not know, though, that your engagement was broken."

"Not permanently broken, only a quarrel on Grace's part. We have had a good many such, as you can judge from these. I don't know what has got into the girl, she is so fractious and difficult to manage."

Hortense remembers what Bryan said of Gerald Alston, but she does not repeat it. Philip is writing a note, dashing it off in haste, and she can think her own thoughts without interruption.

"Of course you will send back the girl's letters?" Hortense says at last. But Philip is too much engrossed with his writing to give her an answer.

So here was an end, she was sure, of all the love-making! And in six more weeks an end of the old house too, Mr. Lancaster had said, as far as they were concerned.

But Philip has finished his note now, and has pushed it to her. It will not take her long to read:

"Mr. Dunbar's compliments to Miss Robson, and he begs to say to her he can by no means allow the letters she refers to in her note to pass into any hands but hers. If Miss Robson really wants the letters, and will come to Aytoun for them, she shall certainly have them, but to no one else can they be given. As for Mr. Dunbar's own let-

ters, he is not concerned about them, but will be glad if Miss Robson will keep them as a souvenir of their pleasant acquaintance."

"You certainly are not going to send this?" asks Hortense after reading it.

"I most certainly am," answers Philip coolly.

"But you will not really keep the letters?"

"If Grace wants them, she can come here for them."

"Bryan might keep mine for ever—that is, if he had any to keep, which he has not. I would never notice such a note as this of yours, and would most certainly leave the miserable letters in your keeping."

"I don't suppose you would come for them, but I rather think Hortense Dunbar and Grace Robson will act very differently in an emergency," Philip remarks as he gathers up the letters and puts them once more under lock and key.

"We are both women," Hortense returns shortly.

"Yet we shall see that these letters are worth coming for," Philip asserts; and then he goes into the hall to drop his answer to Grace into the mail-bag.

"And this is the way Philip judges the girl he would fain marry! Is it our own fault when our lovers think lightly of us?" Hortense questions as she rings the bell for tea.

And then Philip comes back again, and Hortense thinks it is better not to tell him what Mr. Lancaster had said about the mortgage. He might have forgotten for the time that there were but six short weeks left him in the old home, and he has enough to worry him to-night in Grace's desertion. To-morrow will be soon enough to remind him. And the rest of the evening passes without a word being said about Grace or Bryan or Aytoun.



PART IV.

CHAPTER VI.

O Doubt! O Doubt! I know my destiny :
I feel thee fluttering bird-like in my breast :
I cannot loose, but I will sing to thee,
And flatter thee to rest.

WILL GRACE come to Aytoun for her letters? or will she let them go for the trash they are? Hortense is thinking this as she sits at the breakfast-table. Philip wonders too. But no one would think he was very much interested in anything but the morning paper. He is, however, for he says to Hortense as he leaves the table, "Can't you choose your occupation this morning so as to be within call if you are needed. You were shamefully out of the way the day Grace called: don't be remiss again."

"Don't torment the girl," Hortense replies, without giving any promise. And then she adds, as if on second thought, "She will hardly be fool enough to come here."

"We shall see if those letters are not magnets. I will promise not to torment Grace, however. I only hope she will be as kind to me." And Philip saunters out to smoke his morning cigar.

Hortense is not devoid of a little womanly curiosity, and therefore she takes her seat where she can see the approach of any carriage up the avenue. Busy as she is with her sewing, she is able to glance up now and then, and somehow she always happens to look out of the window.

She is rewarded after a time for her watchfulness by the appearance of a pair of horses trotting swiftly up the graveled road; and soon she knows they draw Grace Robson's coupé, and that Grace herself is in it. "Surely she must value those stupid letters," Hortense thinks, but she does not move from her seat, as she is sure she will not be inquired for to-day.

Philip too is on the lookout for the coupé. He comes from amongst the bare, leafless trees, and helps Grace out

of her carriage with grave politeness—not with the same gay look that he wore the day old Aytoun led her captive.

He takes her into the library again, and seats her in the same spot where she sat on that bright October morning, and he is casting rather mournful glances out of his handsome eyes at the blank space on the wall where he then told her he intended to hang a picture of her pretty self.

Grace's glance follows his, and the old desire comes into her heart also to see herself hanging amongst those fine old-fashioned dames. But she will not let it possess her, and says quickly, "Was it either kind or gentlemanly in you, Mr. Dunbar, to bring me here?"

"I was sorry to trouble you," says Philip. "But I did not think you would mind the drive very much, as the day is pleasant after the storm."

"I should not think you would care to see me—" Grace begins.

But Philip interrupts her with, "I shall always be glad to see you. I am not one to feel unkindly toward a person who has once made me happy."

Grace thinks she had better steer into shallow water, so she says, "My letters, please: I have come, as you desired, for them."

"Why are you so anxious for these miserable letters, Grace?" asks Philip. "You may as well let me have them as the earnest of our past love."

"You do not mean to say you will not give them to me, after making me come here for them?" cries Grace in alarm.

"Certainly not. Only I should like to know why you are so anxious for them."

"I suppose every girl likes to have her letters—under such circumstances," says Grace, evasively.

"It is interesting to know the feelings of every girl under such circumstances. I suppose my being a man alone makes me feel indifferent as to who owns my letters to you."

Grace is not quite sure that Philip is not sneering at her, so she says, pettishly, "My letters, if you please, Mr. Dunbar. I am in somewhat of a hurry, and I have your word that you will give them to me."

"And you must not blame me for wishing to give them into your own hands," Philip replies, changing his scoffing tone into a tender one. "I come of an old-fashioned race, and what we prize we are very careful of. The knights in the olden times did not part with even a knot of ribbon entrusted to them by their lady-loves, except to give it back when reclaimed. Should I be less careful of your letters than my forefathers were of a knot of ribbon?"

Not having lived in the olden time on which Philip is so eloquent, and not having had any forefathers save some respectable spinners, who would have fought over something as substantial as a bale of cotton, but never over a knot of ribbon, Grace does not know what to say in answer to Philip's fine speech. But she does know that he is very handsome, and that he is looking down upon her very tenderly. But she is not going to give up her quest so easily, so she says, "Then, as you can give the letters into my own hands, I will take them, if you please."

"Grace, what have I done to make you treat me so?" asks Philip, still regardless of her request. "Is it that you are heartless? or is it because you mistrust me?"

Grace's heart is beating too perceptibly for her to doubt her owning one. And so she says, she thinks with truth, "I am very sure I am not heartless."

"Then you must mistrust me. Do you doubt my love for you, Grace?"

At home Grace has had considerable doubts, but here at Aytoun, with Philip raining tender looks on her, she does not doubt so much. Yet she would rather not answer his question.

Philip is not contented with her silence, so he asks again, "Do you doubt my love for you?"

"Sometimes I do," answers Grace, trying to be bold and to tell the truth.

"But not now—not when you are with me, Grace?"

She does not answer him, and he does not press her, but asks, "What is it that has separated us, Grace?"

"They say such dreadful things of you," she answers, trying to deal in generalities and going back to the old story.

"They say 'is not very definite. And how do you know they tell the truth? It is some money-affairs, I suppose, the gossip is about—some matters you do not understand in the least. And these are the raw-head-and-bloody-bones which have scared you from me!'" Philip adds, reproachfully.

"These are not raw-head-and-bloody-bones, as you call them. Only children are frightened at such names. These are facts," says Grace very decidedly.

"Facts! Do you think these blatant cotton-spinners are more honest than I am? Or that they can judge the actions of a gentleman? Are you going to let these facts, as you call them, part us and keep you from old Aytoun?"

"If you would but prove that they are not true!" and Grace looks up at him uneasily.

"I have given you my word that they are false, and that is all a gentleman can do. They take good care that only vague rumors reach my ears: they are afraid I shall hold them to account, I fancy. So I find nothing really to contradict, and I cannot blame those who do not know me for believing what they hear. But you, at least, after your promise to marry me,—you ought to have given me your full trust."

"I did not mistrust you at first," Grace cries passionately. "I tried to shut my ears: I did not want to hear their cruel talk. You ought never to have given them the opportunity to say what they do of you."

Philip shakes his head doubtfully: "You were not like the deaf adder, I fear, Grace. It did not require the charmer to charm very wisely for you to be caught. I should like any of your friends—Gerald Alston included—to try to tell any of their precious tales into Hortense's ear."

"Hortense is your sister," replies Grace.

"And you were only my *fiancée*! You do well to remind me that our sisters are more true and loyal than our sweethearts. And yet that is not the judgment of the world generally."

"No one would be cruel enough to speak before Hortense. But with me it was different," Grace says by way of excuse.

"But because you heard it was not necessary for you to believe; and not even to tell me, but to write me such a poor little note of dismissal! It was cowardly in you, Grace."

It was cowardly, Grace knows, yet she had acted by counsel—wise counsel: she had had no doubt of it at the time. She had feared Philip's reproaches, and had tried hard that there should be no interview. She has more to fear than his reproaches, though, if she does not want to marry him, she will find.

"Grace, think well before you refuse me again. Will you not be happier here with me than at Bridgeford? Can't you queen it at Aytoun, and forget the scandal and gossip of the miserable town? And, Grace, once here, no one will gain-say you. There have been many happy lives in these old walls: I do not despair of making yours happy also."

Philip's handsome eyes are on her, and so are the eyes of all the fine ladies his ancestresses. The glamour of Aytoun is on her too. No wonder, then, that the gossip of Bridgeford seems false and vulgar, and dies away from her remembrance as the shrill clang of all its mills has died away in the distance.

Love-making is as insipid to the third party as ever Grace's vapid little notes were to Hortense. So let us shut the door on them, and leave the future mistress of Aytoun with its present lord. Into Grace's ear let Philip pour his pretty speeches, for neither you nor I, good reader, have much faith in them.

An hour later Grace drives away from Aytoun without her letters. Why should she want them if she has determined to add more of them to the packet?

"I did not need you, as it happened,"

Philip says to Hortense, looking into the room where she is sitting wondering if Grace will ever go, and what she and Philip can have to say to each other now that their engagement is off.

"Grace does not seem to have minded the tête-à-tête, as you feared she would," Hortense returns dryly.

"I should think not," Philip says with a laugh. "You can congratulate me, if you like. Grace has thought better of it, and Aytoun, I hope, is saved to us."

"Your engagement is on again?" Hortense asks in amazement.

"Yes. I was sure Grace would be tractable if I could only get her here. You women are a trifle unscrupulous when you are ambitious."

And after this dogmatical sentence Philip lights another cigar and resumes his walk. Certainly a pleasanter one, as he feels very confident now of paying off all scores against Aytoun.

Grace Robson is by no means sure that she has done wisely, now that she is once more in Bridgeford. The scandal about Philip Dunbar takes more shape here. It is not the idle breath it seemed to her whilst she sat in the library at Aytoun. And, besides, there are other eyes which have almost as much influence over her as Philip's have, though they are by no means so handsome.

This she feels more as the twilight comes on, and before it is well dark she has worked herself into a state of nervous expectancy anything but pleasant. Her drawing-room is brilliantly lighted, for Grace is timid and dislikes shadows.

She is alone, and moves about restlessly, now walking up and down the room, then stopping to toy with some of her costly knickknacks, and now examining herself in one of the mirrors. It is not vanity, however, which prompts her to look at the pretty reflection, but mere restlessness.

At last the door-bell rings in the same startling way Hortense heard it the day she came to pay her visit of congratulation. There is a quick yet heavy step on the stairs, and through the open door enters Gerald Alston.

Grace tries to greet him indifferently, but does not succeed. She has somewhat the air of a child that has just perpetrated a piece of mischief, and expects to be taxed with it. But fortunately Gerald does not notice her uneasiness. He is too anxious to put the question which has been uppermost in his thoughts ever since he left his own rooms, to begin with the ordinary topics of conversation. He asks at once, "Did you get your letters?"

He looks surprised, as well as displeased, at the brief "No" Grace gives in answer to his question.

"Did you turn coward and fear to go to Aytoun? Oh, Grace, I am ashamed of you!"

Grace is a coward, a shameful coward, and therefore she does not like to be called one. So she answers, as if aggrieved, "I did go to Aytoun."

"And did not get your letters?"

"I changed my mind about them, and did not bring them."

"Did not dare to ask for them or insist upon having them?"

"I changed my mind, I tell you."

"From pure cowardice, I presume," Gerald says scornfully.

"This is the second time you have called me a coward," Grace replies; and to prove she is not one she looks up defiantly into the face bent down toward her with a displeased frown on it.

"Why did you come away without the letters if you are so brave?" he asks.

"Because," she replies slowly, "I renewed my engagement with Philip Dunbar."

Grace feels relieved as soon as the murder is out. But she is rather frightened at hearing a deep curse pronounced, not against herself, but the man she is supposed to love much better than herself.

"I might have known it!" Gerald says bitterly. "Fool that I was, to urge you to go to Aytoun for those miserable letters! What is there in this Philip Dunbar which seems to charm you as a snake does a bird?"

"There is a good deal in him that I meet with in no other man of my ac-

quaintance," says Grace angrily, for if she cannot always answer Philip's sarcasm, she can Gerald's plainer mode of speech. "Philip Dunbar is a gentleman, and knows how to treat a lady with courtesy."

"A gentleman!" exclaims Gerald, taking up her words in an exasperating way. "A gentleman! Pray, does he show his breeding in the way he pays his debts? Or in what do you perceive it?"

"In his manners," Grace answers shortly.

"In his manners!" Gerald quotes on. "Of course he is soft and sweet when he wants you to pay his bills for him. He would be a fool if he were not."

"I suppose you have no bills, and you are not in need of any money," Grace says rather pointedly.

"You are right," Gerald replies. "I am no cat's paw, soft and velvety, yet ready to wound the hand that strokes me."

Grace is not fond of metaphor, so she does not answer him.

"Did Philip Dunbar make any confessions to you?" asks Gerald sneeringly. "Did he tell you it is your money he wants?"

"I do not know that I am bound to tell you what he said. But if it is any satisfaction for you to know it, I don't think he ever mentioned money."

"And you do not think that it is your half million he is after?"

"I ought. I have heard you say it often enough for it to make some impression on me," Grace says sullenly.

"Yet you might as well own the truth, and say you do not believe me."

Grace does not answer this, but says, "Philip has hid nothing from me. He told me very plainly that he is a good deal embarrassed."

"He did, did he? And, woman-like, you took his cool impudence for a confession. Did he tell you also how much he needs to rid him of these embarrassments—that his beloved Aytoun is heavily mortgaged, house, lands, even his family pictures and the silver?"

Grace starts a little. Certainly she

did not know it was so bad as this. But she says at once, "I don't see why my money cannot be used to pay off the mortgage if I choose to do it. I have a fancy for Aytoun, and I am not so poor that I cannot afford to have fancies, I suppose."

"Certainly not, if you buy the place in your own right. But to pay for it for Philip Dunbar is quite another thing."

"I can do that too if I please," Grace says curtly.

"I suppose you can. And yet I think you would like the man you call your husband to have a fair name, and at least to be spoken to by the people in his own set."

"Oh," Grace says, with a little laugh, "you will all be eager for my invitations when I am mistress of Aytoun."

"I shall not, for one, if Philip Dunbar is master," Gerald answers decidedly. "I suppose," he continues, "Dunbar's haughty sister is as eager for the match as he is, and is as sweet as a rose, as she knows very well how to be on an occasion. And yet Bryan Bonham, for one, never goes near Aytoun now-a-days."

"If you mean Hortense," Grace replies, not caring to notice the bit of information Gerald gives her about Bryan, "I did not see her to-day. I have no reason to suppose that she even knew I was in the house."

"She knew it well enough, and would not put out her hand to save her sister woman from such a fate as yours is. Philip Dunbar has set his trap well. It is a plain 'will you walk into my parlor? says the spider to the fly;' and you were just as innocent as ever the fly was."

"You can say vain, if you please, and wish to make your fable applicable. Well," Grace continues with a little sigh, "if I have my foible, I am not different from the rest of mankind. You have a desire stronger than your liking for a cigar, I suppose, only you are wise enough to keep it to yourself. I am more open, and confess my weakness is to be mistress of Aytoun."

Oh, Grace, Grace, some one has wisely said if a woman talks long enough, she will tell you all that is in her heart.

Why don't you keep to monosyllables, and so be safe? Of course Gerald Alston has his weakness, his longing, but he is far too wise to tell it, even into your small ear.

Gerald is watching her as eagerly as ever Delilah must have watched Samson to see if he had opened his heart truly to her. She is honest in her confession, he sees, and he says quietly, "I do not blame you for the wish. Aytoun is a fine old place, and you would make a worthy mistress of it. Will you promise me, on your honor, to marry the owner of Aytoun?"

"I have told you I am engaged to Philip Dunbar," Grace says coldly, not liking his sudden change of manner.

"But I want your promise."

"You shall have it, then. I shall certainly marry the owner of Aytoun. Will you come to the wedding?"

All through the night, whenever Grace woke, and even the next morning, Gerald Alston's face as he asked her, "Will you promise me, on your honor, to marry the owner of Aytoun?" haunted her.

Had he, after besetting her for months, maligning Philip on all occasions, telling her every evil thing he could of her lover,—had he at last fallen into her caprice? and does he think, as she does, that living at Aytoun is the most desirable thing in life?

She half wishes she had confessed her weakness—as she is pleased to call her ambition—to Gerald long ago, if by so doing she could have so easily changed his opinion of Philip. He was fonder of her than she had thought if he was so anxious that her whim should be gratified, even at some personal cost to himself. She would ask him to Aytoun often, and Philip would like him better when he knew he had stood his friend at last.

Yet with all her pretty plans for rewarding Gerald, and herself-gratulations, Grace is uneasy. She is not one to go her own way boldly even if unwisely, but rather she is apt to answer quickly to the moods of others. A happy state of being, perhaps, for a woman when the husband is chosen, but alas for her in the choosing!

CHAPTER VII.

For one, the gold is far and dim;
For one, a glimpse of things to be;
But here it sparkles, at the brim
Of full felicity.

"HORTENSE, will you put down that everlasting seam and come out for a walk? One would think your Ulysses was roving over the world as of old, instead of practicing law in Bridgeford, and that all your love lay in your needle's point."

Hortense does not defend herself. She has a contempt for a man's strictures on needlework, and she is rather glad of an excuse to lay aside her sewing and go out.

"Come this way: I want to consult you about a clearing I am thinking of making," Philip says as she joins him ready for the walk.

They start off gayly, Hortense leaning on Philip's arm, chattering to him like a bird in spring. She will have to give up this handsome brother of hers soon to Grace Robson—give him up with but slight reservation—for the six weeks are nearly spent, and with the life hereafter at Aytoun she will have but little to do.

The old home will not be hers much longer, and the most she can expect will be an occasional day spent with Philip, if Grace will be kind enough to ask her. This Hortense has thought whilst sewing in the library. But in the fresh, frosty air, leaning on Philip's arm, she will not worry herself with thoughts of the future, but enjoy the present. For some reason she feels this is her last walk with Philip, and she would fain have no clouds to mar the perfect sunshine.

How long Philip will keep off the subject of Grace she does not know, but she will do her best to make him talk of something else, if possible.

"What the deuce are the sheep in that field for?" is Philip's first remark. "Hill must be asleep. There will not be a blade of grass left when he finds them there."

"They prefer grass to turnips, and have had no trouble in choosing," Hortense replies, her quicker eye discovering a gap in the fence between the fields.

"Let the creatures alone, to browse according to their inclination."

"I wish we were all sheep, if our desires could be so limited—a choice between grass and turnips, and no marrying nor giving in marriage. They are nearer the commonly-received ideas of heaven than I thought."

"Eating turnips or baaing at each other?" Hortense asks.

"Hortense," Philip says suddenly, ignoring her question, "when are you and Bryan going to set up your own establishment?"

"As soon as you are done with me," Hortense replies.

"It would be quite effective," Philip goes on to say, "if we were both to be married at the same time. The only two of the Dunbars that are left married by the same ceremony would make quite a fine article for the Bridgeford newspapers."

"Thank you! I will wait for my obituary for so lengthy a notice. 'Miss Dunbar in simple white muslin, and—'" She does not finish her sentence by a description of Miss Robson in white silk and lace.

"I don't see why you must figure in white muslin," says Philip. "Can't you get what you need in Bridgeford?"

"Yes, and forego teaspoons and table-linen. You forget Bryan is as yet a poor man, and he does not want a fine wife."

"He will not be as poor as you think. There will be plenty of money at Aytoun, and you don't suppose I shall let my only sister pinch and economize?" Philip says with a little pressure of her arm.

"Thank you!" Hortense answers, gratefully. "But Bryan and I are willing to try the dinner of herbs, with love for seasoning—"

She is sorry for the quotation before she ends it, for Philip says quickly, "And you will leave the stalled ox for Grace and me? But it will not be as bad as that, I hope. There is no reason for us to hate each other."

"I defy her to hate you," Hortense rejoins, looking with eyes brimming with love at Philip.

"It is a poor thing, this fuss about a wedding, in any case," Philip goes on to say. "I wish you women had more sense in such matters. Why will you, just for the love of a little display, drag a poor fellow up to be stared at by all your acquaintance? These church weddings, as they are managed now-a-days, are heathenish instead of Christian affairs. You should have strength of mind enough to drop such fashions."

Philip is dreading his own wedding, and his appearance before the Bridgeford fashionables after his long disappearance. But Hortense does not fathom the reason of his dread, and says, "I shall have the desired strength of mind. Bryan and I will have the most private wedding possible not to look like a run-away match."

"Then I will persuade Grace to follow your example. Let the two weddings be on the same day, Hortense, and then I shall have an argument to support my request."

"No," Hortense replies decidedly. "It would be cruel in you not to let Grace look her very prettiest and wear her diamonds. You must make the most of your rich bride. Besides, Bryan and I have no day fixed as yet."

She does not add that she will not risk Bryan's refusal to stand by Philip's side even on such an occasion. It is her greatest trial, this dislike which her lover has for her brother, but as she believes it is only a prejudice, she hopes it will die out under her influence.

"I am glad you will live in Bridgeford," Philip says, giving up the point of the double wedding, as he sees himself it is not altogether feasible. "We will have the old style of living back at Aytoun, and Grace will need some hints from you. She is good-tempered enough not to mind being taught a little by you."

"I think she is good-tempered," Hortense replies, really knowing but very little about her future sister-in-law, yet in her heart determining not to interfere with her as mistress of Aytoun.

"I am sorry you have not seen more of each other," Philip resumes. "Grace

told me the other day you had been but once to see her, and then only for a few minutes."

"Yes, I have been negligent," Hortense admits.

"I told her you were a good deal taken up with Bryan. I suppose that is a good excuse, and certainly it is one Grace ought to be satisfied with. You must go to-morrow."

Hortense promises, and now hopes Philip has exhausted the subject and will talk of something else. But no: he rambles on, not saying anything brilliant, but still recurring to the same topic.

Presently he tells Hortense what improvements he intends to make in the place—expensive improvements, which it will take a good deal of money to complete; and she knows very well where he expects to get it.

Hortense, like many girls with no fortune, thinks a man has no right to spend his wife's money for his own advantage, though the law may give him that privilege. Fortunately, rich women are accustomed to take more practical views, or there might be more matrimonial jangling than there is. But Hortense is shrinking from Philip's talk of improvements as if he hurt her; and he never guesses it, and goes over old schemes of his father's and grandfather's which had been abandoned for want of the necessary means.

Hortense is glad that they have reached at last the piece of woods Philip thinks of clearing. It is a broad belt of hickory and oak which lies on the roadside and screens the house from the view of travelers on the high-road in the summer-time. The trees are grand old ones, remnants of the original growth of the land, such as will grow only on virgin soil, and once cut down their like will never be seen, on that spot at least.

Hortense is clearly against an axe touching them: "There is plenty of land idle—why cut down such trees?"

"But their wood is valuable, and the new ground is rich, and the trees are useless standing here."

"They screen the house from the road,

and there are no finer trees on the place. It is a sin to destroy such growth—only a degree less, in my opinion, than murder."

Philip argues for the fine field he will have if he clears the land, and Hortense listens to him impatiently, determined not to be convinced. She is leaning against one of the trees she would fain save, and Philip is sitting on the top rail of the fence, facing her.

They are both so eager in their discussion they never hear the sound of horses' feet approaching up the road. The sound is not very marked, for the two horses are walking very slowly, as if not to interrupt the conversation their riders are apparently engrossed in.

Hortense stands facing the road. She is scornfully listening to Philip's eulogy on the strength of new land. Suddenly she catches sight of the riders, and she is glad Philip's back is turned to them. She hopes they will pass without his perceiving them, for it is Grace Robson and Gerald Alston, and they are talking too earnestly to notice the two who are standing in the woods so close to the highway.

Hortense tries to look as if she had seen no one coming up the road—no one behind Philip of whom he has been talking during so much of their walk. But Grace has caught sight of them, and a deep blush tells more plainly than words can that she shrinks from the meeting. Hortense's eye flashes at the blush—if it were one of coy pleasure she would have smiled at it—and she raises her head haughtily as Gerald Alston looks at her with no love in his cold gray eyes.

Philip is giving the difference between the yield of old ground and new, and he is rather surprised at the haughty look which has come into Hortense's face. But he too now hears the sound of the hoofs, and he turns quickly and raises his hat courteously, with no cloud whatever on his handsome face. Grace bows awkwardly and hesitatingly in return, and Gerald Alston rides on without lifting his hat to any one.

Philip returns to the merits of the new ground, as if only interrupted by casual

passers-by, until both are out of sight: then he says a little abruptly, "Come, Hortense, there is no use in staying here in the cold;" and somewhat hurriedly he leads the way toward the house.

There is no more gay talking of the wedding-day and of the improvements Aytoun is to see. Philip has grown suddenly moody and silent.

"I wonder if she is playing false?" Hortense thinks, and she looks at Philip compassionately. But he does not heed her looks, or say a word about Grace, in the way either of excuse or of fault-finding; and Hortense is silent because he is so.

All the pleasure of Hortense's walk has vanished, and in her heart she wishes she had stayed at home with her much-abused sewing. And then she grows angry with Grace on her own account, for the echo of Philip's wedding-bells was to have been her own, and how will Bryan take it if there is to be another postponement?

CHAPTER VIII.

And he who stands upon a slippery place
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up.

THE next morning at breakfast there are two letters for Philip in the letter-bag, and Hortense watches him furtively from behind the coffee-urn as he examines them. One, she is confident, is from Grace, for she knows now that young lady's style of envelope, and the cipher on it is large and imposing enough to be recognized at once. The other note Hortense is not curious about, nor does she feel at all aggrieved when Philip, after glancing at it, puts it into his pocket. Grace's note is so much more interesting in her eyes that she busies herself with the cups and saucers, so as not to scan Philip's face too closely as he reads it.

"Grace has rather improved in her penmanship," Philip says, throwing the note dexterously across the table within Hortense's reach, and she at once takes heart and thinks the girl has written a pretty apology for her yesterday's offence in riding with Gerald Alston, or perhaps

an invitation, which, if accepted, she hopes may make matters straight in a feminine way, without the humiliation of a vindication of her conduct.

But Hortense finds out her mistake as she reads the harmless-looking little note, for Grace has written again to break her engagement. It is a cowardly note, Hortense thinks as she reads it. Evidently the girl could not speak to Philip so coldly, and knows she could not. The two small pages are taken up chiefly with a prayer that he will regard this poor little missive as decisive, and will not seek an interview with her.

"As if I should trouble myself for such a jilt!" Philip says scornfully. "I hope she will not come again to Aytoun, as she did when she wanted her letters."

Hortense is glad to find Philip adopts this view of Grace's shabby behavior: she was afraid he would take it more to heart than he seems inclined to do.

"She has not the grace to write a proper note," Hortense says, a little bitterly. "I think, myself, you are well rid of her."

"If you could only say the same for Aytoun!" returns Philip; and having lost all appetite for his breakfast, he leaves the table and goes out.

Hortense has many anxious thoughts this morning. Philip's disappointment, Grace's heartlessness—there must be more in both than appears on the surface, and for the latter there is no clew that she can find to read the riddle, unless Gerald Alston could furnish it.

Then Bryan's face comes before her, when she will have to tell him what she fears will inevitably postpone her own wedding, for how can she leave Philip so forlorn as he is just now? He must get a little used to this disappointment before she flits from him. And she goes over some arguments which she hopes will be convincing to Bryan, though she cannot help having grave doubts of it.

Later in the day the thought flashes upon her that Philip expected to pay off the mortgage out of Grace's fortune. Has he any other plans now? If not, can she aid him? Her own fortune is not large—a bare ten thousand—but if it

could assist Philip, if he could make any arrangement with it to keep old Aytoun, Philip should be very welcome to it.

Hortense waits impatiently for the dinner-hour to arrive, so that she may speak to Philip, for the six weeks Mr. Lancaster warned her of are nearly spent now, and there is no time to lose. But instead of Philip there is only a message from him, telling her he has had to ride some distance from home on business, and that she is not to wait dinner for him.

She is not altogether sorry for his absence, for she wishes to go to Bridgeford and see Mr. Lancaster. He may be able to make the necessary arrangements to meet the mortgage, and in that case Philip cannot refuse her money as he did when she had offered it to him. So, as soon as dinner is over, Hortense starts on her walk to Bridgeford.

It is a gloomy, threatening afternoon, and the clouds are skurrying over the sky as if they would fain get out of the way of the rude wind and not do his wild work to-night.

Hortense rather enjoys the walk. She has been sitting still all the morning absorbed in perplexing thoughts, and now the exercise is a relief to her. Then, too, being of a sanguine temperament, she believes she has found a solution of her troubles in the arrangements which her visit to Mr. Lancaster may enable her to make to-day. So she walks to Bridgeford quickly—so quickly she is surprised when she finds herself in the bustling town.

She will not pass Grace Robson's house to-day, lest she may chance to see her pretty face, and she does not care to glance at it, for she does not feel kindly toward the girl on Philip's account. So she turns up the side street she found refuge in before, on the day she avoided meeting Gerald Alston.

Hortense passes the same row of tenement-houses, and looks with some interest to see if the house which then wore its shabby badge of mourning has a more cheerful aspect now that the corpse has been carried out of it. But it looks even more forlorn and dismal

with its windows bowed, as if afraid to let in God's sunlight, and from each shutter a black streamer floats out on the wind to tell the careless passer-by that there has been a death here, unlike the bloody stain on the Israelitish door, which told of God's mercy and the death angel's passing by. But we of this day trumpet our griefs and draw the veil over our blessings.

There is the same rushing, noisy stream of life pouring out of Blidale Mill as when Hortense passed there last, but she does not feel the same pity for the overworked women and children as she did then. Only there is a sense of relief that Aytoun and Blidale will not be associated together; and then there is a little pang of remorse that she is glad at what must be a cause of heart-ache to Philip, poor fellow! For she thinks his indifference is assumed, and that the woman he was to have married in a few short weeks must have some hold on his heart.

Mr. Lancaster is in, and ready to hear what she has to urge. She always finds him patient and interested, and she is very grateful to him, and trusts him as her one true friend. For Philip has his own annoyances and troubles to dwell on, and Bryan sees always a ready path for her out of all her difficulties; and besides, so many of her cares arise from Philip's embarrassments she does not like to dwell on them to Bryan, fearing his strictures.

This afternoon Mr. Lancaster seems surprised at what she has to tell him, and annoyed as well. The match off between Grace and Philip brings a grave look into his face. "It will make a difference to Aytoun, I fear," he says, with concern.

"That is what I came to see you about. Will the money I have be enough to pay off the mortgage?" Hortense asks.

"Your money! I hope not," Mr. Lancaster says heartily.

"But I would rather have Aytoun saved than anything else."

"Do you know who holds the mortgage?" Mr. Lancaster asks, not noticing what she says.

Hortense mentions the name, a little surprised that Mr. Lancaster should ask the question.

"It has changed hands lately. I wrote to Philip about it yesterday, but I doubt if my note was in time for the mail. If the old parties held the mortgage, I should have no trouble in making an arrangement, backed by your ten thousand. Now it is very doubtful, and I can't promise you success. I am almost glad I cannot."

"Glad, Mr. Lancaster!" Hortense says reproachfully.

"Yes, glad. Your money cannot clear off the debt against the old place, but would only stave off the difficulties for a while; and I do not care to see you beggared for that."

"If we can stave the sale off, as you say, Philip may be able to manage. I would rather see the old home his than have a fortune myself. And I am not afraid of Philip's turning me out of doors when I am, as you say, a beggar."

She speaks lightly, as if all the trouble is at an end, but in her heart she is woe-fully disappointed that there is a doubt of Mr. Lancaster's success. She had so hoped to tell Philip when she went home that Aytoun was safe, for the present at least, that now she is rather desponding, and is anxious to get away from her old friend's admonitions.

But he does not let her off so easily, but goes into some lengthy explanations, to which Hortense gives no heed. She has gone through too much to-day to care whether she is to have a legal hold on Aytoun. If she had, it would be all waste paper so far as she is concerned, for a male Dunbar has always held the place, and she is not one to break through old customs. So her friend need not keep her so long with his vain explanations.

It is so dark when Hortense leaves Mr. Lancaster's there is not much risk of her being recognized, and she can walk boldly past Grace Robson's without a fear. Bryan even could not tell her from any other belated female, and she is glad he cannot, for he is the one above all others she does not care

to see to-night. To-morrow she will feel braver, and can meet his disappointment, perhaps his upbraidings, with more philosophy.

The moon is struggling to rid herself of the wind-driven clouds—struggling ineffectually though, for she no sooner frees her bright face from one than another sweeps over and seems to cover her up hopelessly. Only from time to time does she manage to give a ghastly, uncertain light.

Hortense is rather glad that the clouds are to be on the winning side, for she does not like to be out so late, and would rather go her lonely way unseen, slipping past any wayfarer unrecognized in the dark. As yet she has met no one, and she begins to get used to her lonely walk in the dark, and falls to thinking of yesterday's hopes and to-day's disappointments. Her thoughts are full enough to drive out all fears, until she hears the sound of a horse's hoofs behind her.

Hortense is glad to find she is near the skirt of wood she and Philip argued over yesterday—glad, too, to remember that a part of the fence is down, and that she can turn into the wood, until the horse and his rider have passed. She had not expected such protection when she pleaded for the trees yesterday.

The man is riding slowly toward her, and Hortense finds she was mistaken in thinking it was his horse the sound of whose hoofs she had heard, for in the distance she can hear the almost wild gallop of another horse. Apparently, the man nearest her is riding slowly in order to be overtaken.

Hortense is not frightened, only desirous to be out of sight, lest the moon should chance to show her face; so she creeps into the wood and crouches behind one of the giant trees until the road is clear again.

It seems to her that she waits a long time there. Her position is constrained and uncomfortable, and it is not pleasant to be hiding even behind one's own trees, and for no other reason than that you do not care to be seen.

The horseman in the rear is rapidly

gaining on the one before, who still rides on at a quiet gait. Hortense supposes he must be near the edge of the wood now, but it is far too dark for her to distinguish anything, and she does not feel much interest in their movements—only anxious that they should go on quickly. She is too far from the road to hear any words they may say in an ordinary tone of voice.

Standing there waiting for the tramp of the hoofs to die away, Hortense is startled by the sharp report of a pistol. One of the men must have fired it in reckless sport, and the two horses now are galloping furiously, and seemingly side by side.

She is startled and a little frightened, and she waits in her hiding-place until all sounds die away in the distance.

Then she thinks, with a feeling of relief, that she is not more than a hundred yards from her own gate, and there is not much chance of any one else being on the road for that short distance. Bryan was right in his faultfinding, and she will take care not to be caught by the darkness again in her walks from Bridgeford.

So she comes out from her hiding-place into the road, and walks hastily toward the gate. Suddenly she stumbles, almost falls, over something. A fallen tree, no doubt, for she has not chosen the middle of the road, but keeps close to the wood. Whatever it is, Hortense stops and stoops over it, peering at it with a strange feeling of alarm, as if she had touched unholy ground. While she is bending there, striving to see what the darkness fain would keep from her, the moon struggles to the edge of a cloud and in a ghastly way shows her a man lying at her feet.

Quickly Hortense kneels down and speaks to him. Getting no answer, she feels in the uncertain light for his arm, and her fingers glide down to the wrist and linger upon the pulse. Failing to find the life she is seeking for, she rises and listens anxiously for any sound of a passer-by, as eager now to meet one as a little while ago she was to avoid the dead man there. Alas! how our

simplest actions often do others a great harm! and Hortense questions somewhat sadly whether, if she had walked on boldly, this life would not have been spared, and a poor soul kept free from blood-guiltiness.

Her best plan, she thinks, will be to go to the house and send help—some of the farm-hands, who can carry the sad burden to where it will at least have shelter from the storm, which is gathering fast. She moves away in haste, and then stops. She cannot bear to leave this poor body on the roadside alone in the darkness, even to go and call for help.

Again the moon has broken a way out of the clouds, and shines down clearly on the dead man's face. But is he really dead? for there is blood flowing from a wound in his head. She stoops to bind it, but sees her handkerchief is too small to be of use, and she must search in the wounded man's pocket for his own. He was not killed for plunder, for his pocket-book is safe.

Hortense binds the wound tightly and stops the flow of blood, but whether it is a helpful or a useless work she cannot tell. He has neither moved nor moaned under her hands.

She has given all the help she can now, and she must leave him and send others to his assistance. And as she rises to go she gives a lingering glance at this man robbed of his sweet life almost within reaching distance of her—looks lingeringly into his white upturned face, and a horror comes into her eyes, for there at her feet she sees the still, pale features of Gerald Alston.

Just then she hears the sound of wheels rolling over the frozen road, and the rough voices of workmen singing to beguile the time. They are moving in the same direction with the wind, and she can almost distinguish the words of their uncouth song.

But for the very reason that she can hear them so plainly she knows her cry for help will never reach their ears. She will have to step into the middle of the road and stop them, or they may chance to drive over the dead or dying man for

whom she needs their assistance. If the moon will only shine out a little longer!

She is moving into the middle of the road when just at her feet she sees a pistol. It has fallen from the murderer's hand, and he has not dared to stop and pick it up, fearful that the eye of his victim, still seeing, might recognize him, or thinking the search would be fruitless in the dark. Hortense remembers that his horse's feet had never slackened their speed, even when the pistol was fired.

Hortense, though she does not remember it now, had once told this same Gerald Alston that constitutional timidity made her fear the sight of firearms, and he had sneered at her. He was past sneering now, and no womanly cowardice has kept her from giving him all the help she can. And yet this girl, who has never quailed where most women would have done so, now shivers and grows pale at the mere sight of the pistol at her feet, and hesitates to pass it that she may go into the middle of the road to stop the wagon, which is not so far off now that her cry will not be heard, though it is hid from sight by a turn in the wood. The pistol which the moon is shining on has made her forget even the still form lying so close to her on the roadside, and which a few minutes ago she was so eager to succor. Suddenly she stoops and picks up the deadly thing she feared so a moment ago, and with it in her hand crosses the road and again takes refuge in the wood, crouching behind a tree, her dress tightly drawn around her, for fear the moonlight will reveal her hiding-place.

Crouching there, she has a dim hope that the wagon will pass on and the men never see what is lying so still and rigid by the roadside. But no: the moon, mocking her, throws its full light upon the road. The horse starts and shivers: the singing ceases, the men get out, and with a sudden exclamation examine the object that lies before them. "Murdered!" they say, "but not killed! at once, for has he not tied his handkerchief over the wound to stop the blood?—a useless effort, for he died in spite of it."

"No robber did the deed," they decide, "for the man's watch and purse are safe. Not self-murder either, for there is no weapon near him."

And so there is but one verdict—he met his death by the hand of a foe. And Hortense shudders as she hears their words.

The men take long to consult upon what is best to be done—whether to leave one of their number to watch the body, whilst the rest drive to Bridgeford for the police, or to take the dead man with them and leave him at the police-station.

No one is willing to keep the weary watch by the side of the dead man, when perhaps the murderer is lurking in the woods. And so it is decided to carry all that remains of Gerald Alston in the wagon.

Hortense hears their decision with relief. If they would only move more quickly, not with the stolid slowness of their class, as if incapable of more rapid motion than that of their daily labor! When they have placed the body in the cart they still linger, for one of them proposes that they shall search round a little and see if there is not some trace of why and how the deed was done. Search round a little! Hortense knows well enough to what that search may lead. She takes in her danger—she, crouching there out of sight, with the pistol in her hand.

That a woman could not do the deed will not help her. Her innocence will not plead for her. As guiltless ones as she is, she has no doubt, have been condemned with not half the evidence which would cry out against her and leave her mute.

She fears to move, to lay down the deadly thing she holds so close to her on the ground, for a single movement may betray her. She seems to have been kneeling there an age, though it has been only a few minutes. But the men are afraid to go out of the moonlight into the woods in their quest, and at last the wagon moves slowly on, as if it were a hearse.

Some time longer Hortense kneels there—kneels there until all sounds die

away. Then she rises cautiously, creeps out of the wood into the road, passes the pool of blood the moon shines down into—passes it carefully, fearful that one telltale drop may cling to her skirts. Once safely past it, she runs swiftly up the road to her own gate, still holding tightly beneath her cloak the pistol which has killed Gerald Alston.

As she nears the house she grows more careful. She stops now and then to see if there is any one in sight; creeps up the gravel walk noiselessly; opens the hall door as if she were a thief, and steals up to her own room, glad not to have met any one. Once there, she locks her door and hides the pistol in a drawer under some clothing, locking it up and concealing the key in her bosom.

She does not light a candle, but, still wrapped in her cloak, she opens the window, draws a chair close to it, and with her arms on the ledge she keeps a dismal watch. The moon is lost in the clouds again—lost so as not to show a gleam. The hall clock strikes eight—nine—ten. Hortense never moves: she may be asleep, so rigidly she keeps in one position.

A servant knocks at her door to know if she shall lock up the house, and asks if Mr. Philip is in yet. Hortense says "Yes"—to the first question, perhaps—in a husky voice, and the servant thinks she is falling asleep, and goes off to draw the bolts and make the old house secure for the night.

An hour later all is quiet, and Hortense creeps down stairs and undoes the bolts and locks of the hall door, and then comes back to her silent, rigid watch. Twelve strokes the hall clock gives, and Hortense is still by the open window.

Two hours more she sits there. Then she hears the tread of a horse's hoofs coming up the avenue. They go in the direction of the stable, and soon a man's step is on the gravel. He comes into the house, locking the hall door behind him, and then up stairs very quietly, as if afraid of waking some one. Is it Hortense, watching in the cold, bitter wind, whom he is fearful of disturbing?

Her watch is over now. She quietly puts down the window, and throws herself, dressed as she is, upon the bed. She shivers as if from cold, but she does not seem to know it. You might think she had fainted, or was asleep, or haply dead, except that her eyes are open, wearing a look the peace of the grave could never give them.

The wind blows furiously toward morning. Some of the old trees which have stood the winter storms for centuries give up battling now, and fall crashing to the earth.

The wind shakes the old house, and howls over it as if it would unroof it and show all its secrets. The frightened

women-servants go down to the kitchen, thinking they are not safe so near the roof, and the gardener and stable-boy join them; and they talk in whispers as if some one were dead in the house, and tell stories of death and murders, until they are afraid of the very shadows thrown on the walls by the fire they have kindled on the hearth.

And through all the storm Hortense never moves. She hears nothing of all the crashing the great trees make in their fall—never heeds the wind's wild work. It seems a calm, placid night without, compared to the turmoil in her own breast.



PART V.

CHAPTER IX.

My own name shames me, seeming a reproach.

THE wind dies away as the day dawns, and every trace of the clouds with which it warred last night has fled, leaving a blue sky, and a dazzling sun streaming into the unshuttered windows of Hortense's room—streaming in upon the girl who lies there motionless on the bed.

Alas for the sad hearts the sunshine forces to come back into the world of daily life and put on the accustomed look and smile! When we can bow the shutters and tell the world that we would be alone with our sorrow, we are at least more fortunate than those who must spread their windows wide open, letting in the gaze of passers-by, and wearing the same mien as usual, though their hearts be very heavy.

Which has the heaviest load this morning—Gerald Alston's mother or Philip Dunbar's sister? One sits in her sorrow like a queen, and all around her bow at her requests and speak low words of sympathy; while the other must rouse herself and hide all traces of her grief. For the servants are there, and, though they are few, they are as watchful of their mistress as if they were a host. They talk about last night's storm, and they attribute Hortense's white face and Philip's late rising to the sleepless night the two must have had.

"Miss Hortense was frightened badly," the maid tells the cook. "I saw her in the hall, and her face is as white as my apron. Besides, she never went to bed last night, as you can see if you will look into her room."

Hortense is standing looking out of the dining-room window at all the havoc last night's storm has made. Seemingly, she is marking it, but her thoughts come back only now and then to the fallen trees. Yesterday she would have gone out at once and mourned each fallen giant as an old friend, but to-day she

is past caring for them. The breakfast-things stand untouched, for Hortense is waiting for Philip, who is late this morning. She is torturing herself with the question how it is best to meet him. If he had come in suddenly upon her, it would have been much easier. But now, to catch his footstep first on the stairs, then in the hall, and then to have to face him just as she did yesterday—she hardly knows if she has nerve enough to do it.

She never thinks of shunning him, for there is but little of the proud Pharisee in Hortense, haughty as some of the Bridgeford people believe her. She would never dream of any sorrow or suffering or sin separating her from Philip, for their bond is one of blood, and through it she would share all with him.

No feeling for herself is surging in her heart. Hortense Dunbar might as well be some unknown person for all the pity she will find in that heart. Philip only is written there, and what troubles her sorely is what is best for him. Would it be wisest to tell him all of last night's history—what she had found in the road, and what proof she had hidden up stairs that the work was his? If it was a woman she had to deal with, she would not hesitate. Isolation and loneliness break most women down utterly. But with a man it might be different—how different Hortense cannot tell.

Some might have deemed it their duty to read the sinning one a sermon, taking the sixth commandment for text, and illustrating it with Cain's unholy act. But Hortense is gentler and wiser. In her weak hands lies perhaps the guilt-stained soul, and she loves it none the less for this guilt, but with a tender pity.

To-day, no doubt, it would be a relief to Philip to know that there is one he can speak openly to, without avoiding any phase of his temptation and his fall. But after to-day might he not shudder at

the knowledge she has, and think sometimes that she turned away from his touch or words?

Will it not be better to leave it to himself to speak or keep silent? If he speaks she will not say she has his story by heart, and if he is silent she will not hint by word or action she knows more than he cares to tell her.

She has to come to some quick resolve, for there is a step on the stairs—a heavy step, as of an old man, and at first she fails to recognize it as Philip's. Then she remembers that a change has come over everything, and that henceforth nothing is to be to her as it was.

She hastens to the breakfast-table, to hide her face as much as possible behind the urn, for she is sure it must show some telltale traces of her last night's watch.

Her manner is very gentle, very tender, and Philip supposes she is thinking of Grace's behavior to him, and is sorry for him. He does not dream of whose face she looked into last night by the moon's ghastly light, nor does he know that she carries a key in her bosom.

"There was a dreadful storm last night," Philip begins, feeling that there must not be silence between them. "Hill tells me that some of the old trees were blown down."

"Yes," Hortense answers—"you can see them from the window."

"You must have slept soundly if you did not hear the wind," Philip goes on to say. "It blew loud enough to wake the dead."

Hortense puts down her coffee untasted. She wishes the wind *had* wakened the dead, and Gerald Alston with the rest of the cold sleepers.

Whether Philip's words recall last night's deed to his own mind she cannot tell, but she can guess why he pushes the morning paper from him, and why he leaves his breakfast almost untasted, though he makes a feint to eat it. She understands too why he makes an effort to talk.

Hortense knows all this, yet she cannot speak light words or discuss everyday things, trying to wile Philip's thoughts from what she knows they must dwell

on. There is blood between them, and it seems to gurge up and separate them, even when she would fain cling closer to him than before.

Every little word they chance to say seems to turn on last night's deed, and unwittingly brings up before them Gerald Alston's dead face. And yet neither can tell what the other is suffering. Hortense is wondering if the missing pistol is giving Philip any anxiety, and Philip is wondering in his turn if Hortense thinks the loss of Grace Robson has worked such a mighty change in him. •

A silence has fallen over both of them as icy as death. And yet they cling the one to the other, Hortense giving up all her usual employments and keeping near Philip, and he, like a frightened child who fears to be alone, is unwilling that she should leave him even for a moment.

The house seems to stifle Philip, and as the morning wears on he proposes they shall go out and see what destruction last night's storm has wrought. Hortense catches up a shawl she finds in the hall, and she and Philip go out together and see some of the wild work done last night which can never be undone. Many of the Dunbars have played under the shade of these prostrate trees, many have been sad and troubled under their green boughs, but never before have two such utterly wretched ones stood beside them.

"They make a great gap on the lawn," Philip says, touching one of the fallen trees with his foot. "I should have been very sorry a week ago. But, Hortense, Aytoun is not what it was to me. I would have made any sacrifice to keep it, even to marrying Grace Robson; but I have changed my mind now—changed it since—since last night. The old home must go, and if you go with me, I will willingly leave it."

"Leave it, Philip? Where would you go?" Hortense asks.

"Anywhere, so Aytoun is out of sight, out of hearing distance. Hortense, there are but two of us. Shall I go alone?"

"No," she says, quietly: "I will go with you."

"And Bryan?"

Bryan! Has she thought of Bryan in all this misery? Once in the night she thought of him—wished he were near her, so that she could unburden her heart to him. And then the thought came—it was Philip's secret, not hers, and her lips must be closed even to her lover. And with this heavy knowledge could she stand by Bryan's side and never flinch as if she too were guilty?

Philip is waiting for her answer—Philip, who has built up a wall between them so high no words of hers can reach him. Her lover's voice and all the sweet music of her wedding-bells were drowned out in Gerald Alston's blood. All is swept from her—the past, the future, Bryan, Aytoun. Only Philip is left to her, and they two must go hand in hand till the grave parts them.

So she says, firmly, "Bryan shall not part us. I will go with you, Philip."

"But he will try to part us," Philip returns, hastily. "We men are seldom generous, and hold fast to what we think belongs to us. Bryan will never give you up if he can help himself. It must be by your own act that you leave him."

"Then it shall be by my own act."

"You promise me this?"

"I promise you."

Philip turns and looks at her—at her still white face, at her anxious, troubled eyes—and conscience whispers, "Have mercy on her weak womanhood. Take her not with you, draw her not into the whirlpool of your misery. Let her go to Bryan. With him she will have the common lot of joys and sorrows—with you, wretchedness alone."

Philip loves Hortense, loves her better than anything on earth, and now in his sin and misery his heart pleads for her. And so he says, "Nay, Hortense, this is foolish in me. Bryan has the first claim to you. I must not let you leave him to go with me."

"Bryan can do without me," she replies, trying to speak lightly. "My word is given—I will go with you."

We cannot banish God's angels when He sends them to us in our need. So Philip accepts her promise, though he

does not know that she sees him as he is, and yet never turns away from him, though a happier lot may beckon to her.

"When shall we go?" Hortense asks after a few minutes' silence.

"Next week. You will not mind so early a flitting? Let there be no leave-taking, please. Grace Robson need know nothing of our movements."

He tries to cover up the desire that their departure shall be secret by the mention of Grace Robson's name, and does not know that Hortense would shrink from such a leave-taking and the gossip of Bridgeford as much as he would. If we only knew how few real secrets we possess, we should let go our subterfuges and be more honest in our words.

Grace need not know of their movements, for what has she to do with them now? More than she knows or will ever know till the judgment day, Hortense thinks. That Grace by her heartlessness has really caused all this misery, Hortense does not doubt. As little does she doubt that Grace will sleep and wake, dance and be merry, have her joys and pleasures, until death comes, without ever guessing that a deed of hers has caused blood-shedding. Grace, with her pretty face and not very deep heart, will live on the common life, with perhaps fewer cares than fall to the lot of most; and Hortense, crushed by another's act, robbed of her life's joy by another's deed, will live on too.

They are standing silently, the two who are to go out into the world together, held by a bond of blood, when a man rides in at the iron gate and up the avenue. They do not see him until he is nearly upon them and then both start with a sudden fear. There is no chance for Philip to get away unseen, no hope for an escape. Neither is it a time for weak, womanly fears, but for quick, quiet action, Philip thinks, as, a little pale from the thoughts he cannot put down, he advances to ask the stranger his business.

Hortense follows close behind him, ready for help, or even to fight for him as a tigress would fight. But "the guilty

are fearful where no fear is." The man is only a traveler who has lost his reckoning and would find Bridgeford; and with relieved hearts they tell him it is so straight before him he cannot miss it. But they do not tell him also that they took him for a law-officer.

"Let us go to-morrow, Hortense," Philip says as the man rides off—"to-morrow night."

And Hortense wishes he had said to-night, for a new fear has taken possession of her. But she does not urge him, lest he should guess how much she knows of what he would keep from her.

And so the day passes slowly. Both are clinging to each other, trying not to speak their thoughts, and yet dreading to be silent. They are longing for to-morrow, and yet striving to appear contented with to-day. Was this to be Hortense's life? Was it for this she was giving up Bryan and his love? And yet has she any right to hold him to his past vows, for is he not dead to her—killed last night when Philip took Gerald Alston's life from him? Would Bryan care to stand before the altar with the sister of Philip Dunbar if he knew the truth? She cannot tell, and she must risk nothing in the asking.

It is late when the brother and sister separate to-night, for there is a comfort in each other's presence, and neither of them hopes for sleep. Yet Philip is the first to say good-night, for, having the heavier load to bear, he is the greater coward of the two, and is fearful the servants may notice anything unusual in his habits.

Hortense lingers in the hall up stairs, thinking perhaps Philip will call her. But there is no sound from his room, and if he does not sleep he bears his wakefulness quietly. So she steals at last into her own room, not to try to rest, but to ponder upon what she had best do with the evidence she has kept of last night's deed. The pistol must be got rid of, for if she and Philip leave to-morrow night she cannot possibly carry it with her without Philip's knowledge. She dare not leave it behind her, for how can she tell that it will not in some

way witness against Philip? She cannot destroy it. What can she do with it?

Long does Hortense try to think of a safe hiding-spot, but she fears every place that her thoughts suggest. She cannot dig deep enough to bury it, and there is no pond which will hold it safe if an August drought should come to dry up its waters.

At last Hortense remembers that at the rapids there is a whirlpool—very small, it is true, and hardly worthy of such a name, but it is said to hold fast all which is cast into its waters. She remembers dropping a bracelet into it one day whilst looking over the cliff, and none of her party thought it of any use to try to rescue it, but counted it as a lost thing. She was sorry to lose her pretty ornament then, but she thinks of it now as an earnest that the waters will hold the pistol safe, giving no hint of what they have in their possession, until there are no seas nor water upon the earth, and man too is stripped of all the concealments he fain would wrap himself in.

This pool, which Hortense hopes will keep from Philip the knowledge that she knows his secret, is close under the cliff where she and Grace sat on the day Grace promised to marry Philip. Below the cliff the river foams and tosses itself in a wild way, forcing itself over the rocks. But between two of them it grows helpless, and for all its fuming it is held a prisoner, and in its small fury draws its own waters down; and the Bridgeford boys call it "The Whirlpool."

To find any safe hiding-place for the pistol is a relief to Hortense. The dread she has of Philip's knowing it is in her possession has made her doubly prudent. She changes her dress, though still keeping to an unnoticeable black, strews her things about, and tosses the bed she has never even lain down upon, to give it the appearance of having been slept in. The servants will not say she has kept two night-watches if they judge from the state of the room; and there will be no risk of Philip's learning that she has kept vigil as well as he.

It is well Hortense will not have much

of such work as this to do. Deception injures even the best of us, and the noblest cause becomes defiled when we stoop to falsehood to sustain it. And yet it is the penalty of all secret sin, and the guiltless may become guilty in trying to keep it hidden.

CHAPTER X.

I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice glass,
Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.

BEFORE the sun is up or a servant is stirring in the house Hortense is ready for her walk to the rapids. She takes the key from her bosom, and unlocks the drawer and lifts the clothing, half afraid the pistol she has concealed is not there. But yes, it is safe—safe for her to carry to the river, there to hide it for ever.

Hortense shudders as she sees it, not altogether at the thought that with it Gerald Alston was robbed of life, nor that it was the means of making Philip a murderer. These thoughts might well make her shudder and turn pale. But besides there is a nervous dread she finds it hard to conquer—a foolish fear that to touch the pistol is to enter into the very shadow of death itself.

She is standing there shivering, not at the horror the only witness of Philip's guilt must give her, but at the knowledge that she must carry for three miles at least, pressed close to her, this deadly thing which has already taken one life and might steal away hers also.

Rob her of life? Was this life so sweet to her that she should cling to it and shrink from death?

Hortense starts as she fancies she hears the sound of servants moving down stairs. She must get the better of these foolish fears, and not run the risk of Philip's finding she has the pistol. And so she grasps it firmly and hides it under her cloak.

Noiselessly she creeps past Philip's room, the thought of him giving her nerve. And then she goes down stairs swiftly, and quietly draws the bolts of the

hall door, and lets herself out into the early morning.

It is the longest, weariest walk that ever Hortense has taken, though she cuts off more than two miles by leaving the road and taking a path across the fields. She walks very hurriedly, fearing the few laborers she meets going to their work—fearing they may in some way read her errand in her face and stop and search her. She is like the child in the fairy-story, who heard the bird singing her secret sin.

She hardly understands herself, and grows angry at her want of nerve when she needs it most. She forgets the two sleepless nights she has passed, her anxiety and fears, the stretch worse than the rack, she has been on all day. If she remembered them, she would not wonder why she stumbles on as if born blind, and why she loses the path because she never heeds its turnings.

The bank of the river is gained at last, and Hortense stands just where a few months before she sat with Grace while Bryan lay at their feet. Gerald Alston, she remembers, came that morning in his shooting-jacket, and rested his gun against the tree she is leaning against now, and he sneered at her fears. Fears? Were they not premonitions? And she was angry with him. Can she be angry now with that still white face, which has cut her off from life as most care to live it?

She has little time, however, for such thoughts. She goes to the cliff and looks over. There boils and seethes the small whirlpool to which she will entrust her secret. Will it keep it safe? There is ice formed around the margin, and it requires a firm hand and steady head to drop the pistol so that it will fall into the water. Better that it should remain in her own keeping than lodge on the ice at the edge of the pool, exposed to chance observation. So she bends still farther over the cliff, drops the pistol, and as she hears the splash which tells her it is securely hidden, finds she has lost her balance, and sways to and fro for an instant, clutching idly at the air.

She thinks in that instant, with a sense

of satisfaction, that there will be nothing found on her dead body to reveal the secret she has come to hide. If Philip only knew how safely it was buried!

The next moment a hand has caught her by her dress and draws her back from the edge of the cliff, and with a desperate effort not to faint she looks up, to see Bryan Bonham's white, frightened face bending over her. It calls her back to life and suffering.

"Hortense," Bryan asks, "what does all this mean?"

She thinks that he suspects her of seeking her own death amongst the rocks in the river below them. And she half smiles at the thought, for, hard as life is to her, she is not such a coward, even if she were such a sinner.

"I leaned too far over the cliff," she answers. And then the fear comes into her mind that Bryan has seen what she threw into the whirlpool, and she asks quickly, though trying to command her voice and seem to speak indifferently, "When did you see me first?"

"But a minute ago. I hardly expected to find you here at this early hour."

"Then you did not recognize me?" Hortense says, a little relieved of her fear.

"Not at first. I only saw a woman in imminent peril of falling over the cliff, and I hastened to you. I knew you, however, before I reached you. What could have tempted you so carelessly to risk your life?" asks Bryan, almost angrily, as he recalls how near he seemed to be to losing her.

What tempted her? A brother's danger. But she does not tell him this, nor that she wishes he had let her slip over the rocks. She is weary almost to death, and a walk with Bryan will be no rest to her.

"Hortense," Bryan says as they turn to walk to Aytoun through the fields, "I am glad I have met you this morning. We do not often see each other now, so I am rejoiced to have you a little while to myself."

Hortense does not ask whose fault it is that they have seen so little of each other of late. She has not left Aytoun for months except to go to church or to

make a hurried visit to Bridgeford on business of Philip's.

Bryan would rather be called to account for his remissness than that Hortense should be so cold and silent. She does not even seem glad to have him as her companion for this long walk across the fields. "Hortense," he asks, half angry at her silence, "what has happened to change you so? I hardly know you of late."

"How am I changed?" she asks, willing only to confess to what he charges her with.

"In every way. You have no smile to greet me with, and seem to feel but little pleasure in being with me. Is the fault in me or you? If in me, what have I done?"

"Nothing," she answers sadly. "I have no fault to find with you. We have seen but little of each other lately, but that may be from circumstances, not from intention on your part. I have nothing to complain of."

"And yet you have changed: you cannot deny you have."

"I shall not try to deny it. But did you expect me to be always as I was two years ago? If so, I do not wonder you are vexed to find me altered."

"I expect to find some reason for the change. I did not suppose you would have left me a stranger to your sorrows, if it is to them I must look for this alteration," Bryan says reproachfully.

"We have had a good deal of trouble at Aytoun," Hortense replies, evasively. "I suppose you know the old home is in danger of being sold?"

"But Aytoun will not be your home much longer."

Hortense looks up at him questioningly. Does Bryan know that she is to leave Aytoun to-night?

Bryan does not notice her startled look, and goes on: "You will come to me soon now, and will not miss Aytoun."

"There have been some changes lately," Hortense replies, relieved of her fear, which she sees now was a foolish one. "Philip's engagement with Grace is broken again — this time past all mending."

"And you mean to hint that I am again to be put off for Philip? Hortense, I shall lose all patience with you. If I am so secondary with you, compared to Philip, why did you ever engage yourself to me?"

"Philip did not need me then as he does now," Hortense begins.

"And is that the only reason you listened to me? What would you have done, may I ask, if you had married me, and Philip had needed you as much as you say he does now?"

If he would trap her in her answer, he is surprised to hear her reply hastily, "I do not know. I thank God that decision is not forced upon me."

"Speak more plainly, Hortense," Bryan says, angrily. "We two should at least understand each other. Why are you so thankful that you have not a decision to make, when the question is so simple a one?"

But can she speak more plainly? If she dare not tell him all, if she cannot tell him of Philip's crime to excuse her seeming waywardness, she had better keep silent, even if Bryan thinks the more hardly of her for it.

"Have you nothing to say?" Bryan asks coldly.

"Yes," Hortense answers, trying to speak without a faltering voice. "When I said I would marry you, I meant all I promised. I loved you as strongly as most women love—as much, at any rate, as I am capable of loving."

"As well as you loved Philip?" Bryan asks bitterly.

"Better, I thought. But everything has changed utterly since then. You cannot want me as I am now."

"Do you mean, when you speak in a past tense, that you no longer care for me—that this utter change you tell me of is, that you do not love me?"

Hortense cannot speak this falsehood. She is as true to him now as on the day she listened to his love-tale. Now that she knows she must lose him she is longing for him unutterably. She is not false to Bryan. Only, Philip's sin has shut her out from him, and yet she cannot tell him that it has.

"Do you no longer love me, Hortense?" Bryan repeats, unwilling to read an affirmation in her silence.

"Love you? Yes, I love you. Yet, Bryan, you must let me go free all the same as if I said I hate you."

"That I will never do. I have your own confession, and I will hold you to it, no matter what reason you give for breaking your promise to marry me."

"Not if I wish to be freed from it?"

"No matter how much you wish it."

"But you *must* free me," she says vehemently. "You cannot hold me if I will not be held."

"Can't I?" he replies, smiling down on her. "I defy you to be rid of me after your confession that you love me."

He is counting on always being near her. It is only a little mile from Bridgeford to Aytoun, so cannot he press his love upon her day by day? and can she escape him? Yet to-morrow he may search for her and fail to find her.

She is tempted to let the old bond stand, and when she cannot be found, search as he may, Bryan will in time break it himself. This is the simplest way out of all her difficulties. But no, as Philip's sister she must break it. There must be no stain, no chance of stain, on Bryan's name.

"Bryan," she pleads, "why will you torture me? I tell you I cannot marry you, cannot let our engagement stand. We are forced to say good-bye to each other, and go our different ways."

"And do you think I am to be put off so easily—that I will make no fight for the old life and love? Hortense, what can you mean? In one breath you confess you still love me, and then at once you talk of our parting. You must give me some reason for it, then—something, better than a seeming whim."

"It is no whim, only a sad necessity," Hortense says. "Others besides us have loved and have been forced to separate. Why should we complain?"

"Others may have separated for a sufficient cause. If you think I will blindly give you up, you are mistaken."

"You will not do it blindly if I tell you the cause is sufficient?"

"I will have your proof then, not your mere assertion. I will judge myself of the sufficient cause, not take your word for it. Hortense, cannot you see what you are asking me to do—to give up the love I have cherished for more than two years, and all the hopes born of it?—to give up all right to you, even the slight one of speaking to you calmly?—to give up all hope of having you always? Can you ask this of me, the man you still confess you love? Even if there is anything to part us, do not tell me of it. I will trust you to do me no harm."

"But I should harm you: I could not help doing so. Bryan, why make me confess so much when I would fain be silent? Is it not enough for me to say I cannot marry you?"

"No, not enough to say it. There must be something more than mere words to part us. You are speaking under some strong excitement, though you are so quiet, not from cool judgment. As if I did not know at least what is best for myself, and that is, to keep you as my own!"

"It is not best for you," Hortense replies hurriedly. "Bryan, there is that which should part us even if I stood by your side at the altar. And there are but few who would think I am wrong in resolving so."

Bryan is startled, and looks at her half angrily: "Hortense, do you know what you are saying?"

She does not flinch under his frown. She is Philip Dunbar's sister, and she must not be Bryan Bonham's wife. Neither must she put herself out of the reach of Philip, even if Bryan should urge her to. Both of her loves draw her into the same path now—the first time they have ever done so.

"I must say it," she answers firmly. "I must be as truthful as I dare to be. I must save your name from shame, mine from infamy. Because a sin is a secret one is it any the less black?"

"Sin and Hortense are not yoked together in my thoughts."

He speaks soothingly. Perhaps he begins to doubt if she is sane, and re-

members his fortunate arrival at the rapids a few minutes before.

Hortense is thankful for his faith in her, but the stronger she finds it the more reason that she should do him no wrong. "Bryan, there is something to separate us—something I dare not name even to you," Hortense says firmly.

"But you *must* name it. I will not let you go from me, leaving me uncertain of the cause."

"But I must go. I tell you I would not marry you if you were to plead with me on your knees, and knew without a doubt the reason why we separate."

"Then you have ceased to love me, Hortense?"

She does not answer him, does not even look toward him.

"And all the sweet things you said but a few minutes ago are false?"

Still she is silent.

"And you thought you would part from me, fooling me into a belief that you still loved me, and that an unhappy fate so willed it—making me think there was a reason for your change of purpose, more than a change in your feelings?"

She is like one swimming against the tide. If she hesitates, pauses a moment in her effort to save herself, she will drift back, and all her previous efforts will have been in vain. She cannot answer him, only remains silent, and this silence stings him past endurance.

"And you have been putting me off for months, pleading Philip's want of you, when your own falseness was the true reason—not letting our engagement irk you, only because you saw me so seldom—listening to my beseechings when you no longer cared to answer them? Hortense, have you neither honesty nor truthfulness to own it?"

Still she does not answer him. Better let him think what he will of her than know the truth, even if it made him cling but the closer to her.

"And you are shameless too," he says bitterly. "You would have me believe you guilty even of a sin rather than know you as you really are—merely heartless. You would play the heroic,

and make a seeming tragedy of your miserable farce."

Once before he finished she turned to answer him, but dropped her eyes when they met his, and walked on mutely. Bryan thinks he has hurt her with his bitter taunts. He does not know she only shrinks from the wrong he is doing himself, and from which she dares not shield him.

"Hortense," Bryan says, still angrily, "you must answer me. How long is it since you came to this determination to drop me? Have you been playing your pretty game of fooling me ever since you were engaged to me? When did you decide to tell me what you have to-day?"

"The night before last," she replies, and the words seem to come against her will.

"And I ask again, What decided you?"

She does not say, "Gerald Alston's dead face, and the knowledge of who killed him," but she replies, wearily, "What is the use of going back to causes? I tell you I must break our engagement, and you decide that I am false. I am content to let it rest there: why will not you?"

"Because I cannot bear to think of all my trust and all your falseness—because I would fain find a reason for your fickleness."

Again she does not answer him, for what has she to say? Only the truth, that she is steadfast to him. And if he questions her still further, what next must she tell him? Bryan is watching her face, and he reads something there—something of her love for him, something of her struggle.

"Hortense," he says very bitterly, "Philip is at the bottom of this, and you will not own it."

She starts and glances up at him with frightened eyes—eyes which have known no sleep for two weary nights. Bryan sees the start and her terrified look, and continues pitilessly: "And you are willing to sacrifice me to Philip, willing to render my life void and worthless, never heeding what you make me suffer, so

you can pamper him a while, until he finds another girl as great a fool as Grace Robson to throw you over for."

"Philip will never marry," Hortense rejoins.

"So no doubt you both think just now, whilst he is smarting under Grace's slight. He will think differently after a time, and your pretty martyrdom will go for what it deserves."

"Do you want me so much," Hortense asks, for the moment turning on him for his bitter words, "that you would taunt me into marrying you? Is it not enough that I am false and worthless, but you must hunt me to the death? Cannot you leave me to Philip if as yet he is not weary of me?"

"Yes, I surely can," Bryan replies. "But if you think I do it meekly, with a blessing on your future, you are wrong there. What right had you to come with your truthful-seeming face to fool me? what right had you to swear to love me, when I was less than nothing to you—nothing in comparison with your worthless brother? I tell you, Hortense, to his dying day Philip shall regret this piece of his handiwork."

Bryan's threat is idle. Angry as he is, he would not hurt Philip if it were in his power to do so. But by his threat he has sealed Hortense's lips. A moment ago she flinched so under his bitter words, which had seemed almost a curse, that she half decided to trust him with Philip's secret. But she will not now, but says quietly, "Let me bear the blame. Philip would not part us: he urged me yesterday to leave him and go to you—urged me strongly, with a love that thought first of my happiness."

Bryan does not notice her implied rebuke, but asks, "Then this separating from me is your own act?"

"My own," Hortense answers.

"Then there is nothing more to say. We must treat you women delicately, even if you are false and fickle. Why I should ever have trusted you is the mystery."

They have crossed the fields now, and have turned into the road not very far from Aytoun. Bryan stops here, as if

not going farther. In full view from where they stand is the belt of wood near which Gerald Alston lay the night Hortense found him with the wound in his head. But even at that sight she does not shudder, as she does at the thought that she and Bryan are parting now for ever, and that he is hurt and angry with her.

"Are we to part with only harsh words?" she asks.

"Do you wish soft, sweet ones from me now?" Bryan questions.

"They might as well be kind ones, as we are parting, perhaps, for ever."

"And do you regret the parting? I thought you wished it. I was slow to take in the fact at first, until you were at some trouble to convince me."

"And yet we need not part so bitterly. If you think me wrong, you may as well forgive me."

"If I think you wrong! If I am in doubt, there is no use in my striving to forgive you."

"Be it so, then. You are more cruel to yourself, Bryan, by far, than you are to me. And yet if at any time you find in your heart an excuse for me, it will be a comfort to me to know it."

"You will die comfortless then, I fear," he answers, roughly. "I will be more honest than you have been with me, and so will tell you, plainly, I am not one to love you after you have proved yourself unworthy. I shall do my best to forget you, to crowd you out of my heart. It may be hard to do at first, but it is worth the effort, and I will make a brave fight for it."

She does not plead any longer—she will make no more attempts to win his forgiveness, to establish peace between them. Her love is so different from his: neither doubt, nor change, nor sin could kill it. It might be forced out of the channel of perfect trust into a shallower one, but she would still love on.

Bryan sees she has turned to go, and he gives his last thrust somewhat bitterly: "If I had not met you on the cliff! If I had another day to think you true to me! But you have robbed me utterly of all trust and faith. If I had stayed

another hour by Gerald Alston's bedside, I should have been spared a long day's suffering."

Gerald Alston's bedside! Hortense turns to him again. Her eyes are asking what she cannot put into words. Then the light dies out of them as she remembers there are watches kept by the side of dead men, as well as by the side of the dying.

"I have been watching by Gerald Alston," Bryan says, answering the question he had read in her eyes a minute before. "It is better to be laid low by the cowardly hand of an assassin than to be stabbed by one whom we have loved and trusted."

"Is Gerald Alston not buried yet?" asks Hortense, feeling she must say something, and catching up in her haste the most fearful words she can use.

"He is not dead yet, only badly wounded."

"Not dead?"

"No: what made you think so? The doctors have good hopes of his recovery. His enemy did not do his cruel work as well as you have done yours."

Not dead! And there is hope!

She does not heed his taunt. All is not so completely over with them as he thinks, and she is about to tell him so, when Bryan adds, coldly, "I have been sitting up all night, and have not found my early walk as beneficial as I hoped. You will pardon me if I say Good-morning."

He lifts his hat with bare courtesy and turns down the road toward Bridgeford.

Hortense does not call him back. The reaction is too great for her, and dizzy, almost reeling, but with a feeling of intense thankfulness to Heaven, she leans against one of the trees until her weakness is somewhat past. One thought alone is uppermost—Gerald Alston is alive, and Philip's hands are clean from blood!

Bryan glances back and sees Hortense standing there, and believes she is watching him. She may take her last look, for he is not one to be fooled twice, he thinks. She must try her lessons on another.

"Philip," Hortense says, laying her hand on his shoulder as she speaks, "Gerald Alston is not dead, and the doctors have good hopes of his recovery."

She has found Philip in the library, with his arms resting on the table, and his face buried on them, thinking what thoughts she can only guess. He raises his head as she speaks, and looks as if groping to take in her meaning, and then says in a low, hurried voice, "Thank God!"

Hortense takes these words to heart as we take words of penitence on a death-bed from careless, sinful lips. Hereafter there will be less gloom in her life because of that whisper.

"Who told you he was dead?" asks Philip suspiciously.

"No one," Hortense answers quietly, for she has no fear now of losing her hold on him, no dread that he will turn away from her. "I saw him myself on the road, as I thought, dead."

"On the road? Where?" Philip asks.

"At the edge of the woods, just where he fell."

"Fell?"

He would learn how much she knows.

"Yes, fell," she answers steadily. "Just where he was shot."

"Shot? Who could—"

But she interrupts him quickly: "I found your pistol close beside him on the road."

Philip cannot disclaim it, for his name is upon it; so he asks quickly, "What did you do with it?"

"I was afraid it might do you mischief, and I have just come from throwing it into the Whirlpool, which will keep it safe."

"And you have known all this, and never turned from me? Hortense, why is your love unlike all other women's?"

She thinks he is referring to Grace, whose faithlessness has brought all this sin and wretchedness upon him. She has not forgiven Grace quite yet, and she says, a little bitterly, "You judged me by too low a standard."

"By Grace Robson's height? Do you think I have given a second thought to her since she broke with me?"

"I thought she—" and then she stops. Grace's ride with Gerald, followed by her note, she has thought all this while, was the motive of Philip's act. He understands her, and says, "What I have done does not bear a feather's weight on Grace. She may marry whom and when she pleases, and I shall only wish her joy on her wedding-day."

"What, then, tempted you?" asks Hortense.

"To do such a deed? Neither love nor jealousy. When Grace's note came there was another from Lancaster, telling me Gerald Alston had bought up the mortgage, and then of course Grace's little note informed me there was not the smallest chance of my paying it off, for I only hoped to do so with her money. Even then, though I might have cursed Alston, I never thought of working him any harm. I heard in Bridgeford some silly vaunt the man had made about owning Aytoun—a boast that he had only gained what he had long plotted for."

"Had you any words with him?" Hortense asks.

"No: I did not even see him then. I met him on the edge of the town. We were both on horseback, and I should never have known him in the dark if he had not chanced to pass under a street lamp. I was armed, and smarting under the recollection of more than one wrong, for all the scandal Bridgeford has enjoyed about me for these months past was part of Alston's work. He would win Grace by any means—Grace or Blidale Mill."

Hortense does not ask any questions. Philip may tell her as much as he pleases: she will not seek to know more than he chooses. But he does not need to be questioned, for he intends to make a clean breast of it.

"The devil prompted me, as I caught sight of Alston's face under the gaslight. I let him get ahead of me, intending to overtake him at the gate and speak to him—not kind words, you may be sure. But Harold became frightened at the rising storm and ran madly. There was no chance for words, and, as I said, the devil prompted me."

"And that was the reason you never drew your rein for even a moment?" Hortense says.

"You were there?"

"Near by, amongst the trees. I did not know any harm was done, for I heard both horses running."

"Yes, Alston's ran too, frightened by the pistol-shot. I managed to turn Harold down a side path, and so left the road to the riderless horse, and I made a circuit and came into the turnpike some miles above. At the tollgate I heard that Gerald Alston was killed, and that his horse had been found miles away. It was supposed that the man who had killed him had ridden the horse until he was foundered, and then had left him on the road, making good his own escape. The toll-keeper never dreamed to whom he was telling his story. Nor did I ever dream, Hortense,

that you knew the truth, or I might not have faced you, as I did, as if I were guiltless of Gerald Alston's blood. Yet even you cannot tell what I have suffered in knowing no act of mine could wash out the red stain. It was very fearful."

"God shield us from the consequences of all our blind and hasty deeds!" Hortense says fervently.

"And you are sure Alston is alive?"

"Very sure."

"Who told you?"

"Bryan. He watched by him last night."

"Bryan! Then life will not be so weary for you, dear, as I feared I had made it."

"The weariness is all past," is Hortense's answer.



PART VI.

CHAPTER XI.

The warm noon ends in frost,
The worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep-bells, die out from us
On the desert hill cloud-crossed.

TO-NIGHT Hortense sleeps a sleep as dreamless as death. Philip's sin, Bryan's harsh words, the shadows before her, the gloom behind, have all been kindly blotted out by "Nature's soft nurse."

There was no journey taken last night, for Philip has lost his fears, and he will not steal away now in the darkness when he is in no danger. And Hortense's cloud begins to lift a very little, and is not quite so dark, showing a silver lining if she can judge by the edges.

Of course, Aytoun will have to be given up, but that is a light trouble, if she can walk out of the old home in broad daylight, compared to the bitterness of a night-flitting. And Bryan may yet know why she had thought it best to free him from their engagement. She owes it to her former lover to tell him, and life would not be so heavy if she knew he no longer thought hardly of her.

So Hortense wakes to find to-day is not so oppressive with its cares and sorrows as yesterday, and she is not so cast down.

Philip too has risen above the utter horror of the past two days. His organization is not a very delicate one, and, being free from the outward consequence of his crime, he will soon forget there was any sin in it. And Hortense finds he has risen to his usual level. Whilst she is in the dim twilight, Philip is again basking in the full sunshine, almost forgetful of the Egyptian darkness he has passed through.

Philip rides out of the iron gate of Aytoun with much the same feeling of joy with which the prisoner leaves his dungeon. His confinement of two days has made him restless and impatient for motion, and now that he can ride

over the country a free man, with no fear of being stopped, he is anxious to be in the saddle. Gerald Alston lying wounded almost to death will not haunt him long, for, not having drunk the bitter cup of death, he is not so sure that Alston has not had fitting punishment for his malice and scandal. That he, Philip Dunbar, should have made himself judge and avenger is not much of a sin in his eyes.

Hortense sees Philip ride off with a slight sense of relief, for she would be alone with her thoughts, and she is feeling keenly the reaction mortals are bound to feel after there has been a greater strain than usual on nerves and emotions. So she sits idly thinking of the past and present, and a little of the future.

It is nearing the dinner-hour, and Hortense goes down stairs to be in readiness to meet Philip when he comes in. She wonders where he can be so long, and thinks he has forgotten the flight of time, weighed down, as she fain would hope, with so sore a burden. She has no presentiment of future trouble in store for her: there is none of the hush which is said to come before the earthquake. The feet of them who bring evil tidings are at the very door, and she hears them not.

She does hear a noise at last, which attracts her attention, for she is listening for Philip's footstep. So she opens the door to go and meet him, but instead she comes upon a strange man, a laborer, she judges from his dress, standing in the hall.

Hortense thinks he needs help from her: she never dreams he is there to offer help to her. The rough jacket covers a kind heart, and he is anxious to give her some little preparation for the trial in store for her.

"It is an accident," he says quickly. "The master has been thrown from his horse."

"Philip! where?" She asks so quietly he never guesses the words come mechanically, but thinks she would know the spot where the accident happened. So he tells her: "Just at the end of the woods—not a hundred yards from his own gate."

Just where Gerald Alston fell—just where she had seen the white face of the man she left for dead!

She starts to pass out of the hall door to go to Philip, now that she knows where he is. But the man holds her back. "They are coming with him," he tells her: "you will do no good by going."

"How did it happen?" asks Hortense, glad to hear a human voice in this agony of suspense.

"The horse shied at something on the roadside, and he was thrown."

The horse remembered better than his master what had happened when he last passed that spot. He had not forgotten the sudden pistol-shot which had hastened his mad gallop into a still swifter one, and he would not go by the place. Hortense takes in this thought, this just retribution perhaps, yet not less bitter from its being just.

"You had better send for the doctor, to have him here handy if the master is still alive," the man suggests, seeing Hortense is still waiting there.

This rouses her to action, and life is more bearable because of the dim hope his words bring her.

There are two women keeping lonely watch to-night—Gerald Alston's mother and Hortense Dunbar. The mother watches tenderly, but at every groan of suffering there is something very like a curse in her heart on the hand that caused the pang. But there is a blessing too in the same heart for the unknown one who bound up the wound and thus saved the precious life.

The curses, if they fell, would do no harm to Philip Dunbar, who lies still and deathlike, past all harming. Only the room does not wear the appearance death is sure to give, and Hortense watches with the look on her face suspense always gives.

There is no one near her save the two

women-servants, who are kind and sympathizing, and the doctor, who comes frequently, watching all the time to see how her strength holds out. He has known her all her life, and loves her very much as he would love his own daughter if he had one. Philip has never been much of a favorite with him, but he looks pityingly at the almost lifeless form of the strong, handsome man suddenly brought down to utter helplessness. It is one of the mysteries of life, such as he often sees and as often wonders at.

There is one prayer in Hortense's heart, never breathed because she dares not name it—that consciousness and contrition may be vouchsafed. She has a strong hope, too, that Bryan will hear of her trouble, and will forget his anger and come to her. She is beginning to weary for that sympathy which alone makes trouble bearable—not words, but the mere presence of one who loves her, if only to break the stillness which has fallen over the old home.

For many weeks Hortense has kept watch at Philip's bedside. Now and then one of the servants comes to insist upon taking her place while she goes to lie down, promising to call her at the slightest change. But there has been no change in the state of the rigid form lying there. It is not death, and yet it scarcely seems to be life.

So the weeks drag on, and then there comes a little change for the better—a slight consciousness and a little moving of the head and arms. Then the doctor gives his opinion. "Philip may grow better," he says; and then he stops to watch Hortense's face, so as not to tell too suddenly all he fears.

"Will he never be altogether well?" Hortense asks, feeling sure there is something kept from her knowledge.

"The spine is certainly injured," the doctor says significantly.

"Tell me the whole truth, please."

"He will never walk again, I fear," and then he adds, "The brain is very apt to suffer with the spine, and Philip's case is not different from the common run of them."

It is a double sentence—mind and body both are useless for this world's work!

"Will he suffer?" Hortense asks, catching at the one hope.

"No: if he did, his case would not be so hopeless. I must not deceive you, Hortense. Philip will never be himself again—not imbecile, but weak in mind and body."

Hortense does not murmur or give a groan, and yet the full weight of the retribution seems to fall on her frail shoulders; for Philip lies there quietly, only at times is he conscious, and when he is, he seldom asks any questions about himself; and no one would care to tell him of his fate—always to be a prisoner, never a free man again.

Heretofore, Hortense has not known the passive suffering which makes saints. Action may make martyrs and conquerors, but it never places the glory on the head which shows the victory is complete, the battle won.

"Mr. Lancaster is down stairs, Miss Hortense."

Philip is asleep, so she motions to the servant to take her place whilst she goes down to see her old friend.

She finds him in the library, not seated comfortably, but walking about restlessly. He comes forward to meet her with outstretched hands, and marks, as he speaks to her, the change sorrow and watching have made. Yet he never tells her she is pale and worn-looking, but inquires at once for Philip.

"He is as well as he will be for a long time, perhaps ever, the doctor thinks," she replies sadly.

"Is he sitting up?"

Hortense shakes her head. As yet she cannot trust herself to speak of Philip's condition, even to so old a friend as Mr. Lancaster.

"There will be no risk in moving Philip?" Mr. Lancaster asks anxiously.

"Moving will do him no harm," Hortense replies, and for a moment her eyes are bright with glistening tears. But these do not drop, and she asks firmly, "Is the old home to be given up so soon?"

"You are not to be hurried, and yet if I were you I should leave as soon as I could conveniently: your staying here now is only through an act of courtesy. Have you thought of any place where you would like to make your new home?"

"No," answers Hortense. "I have had no time to think in my anxiety for Philip. It will not be very troublesome to make our move, however. Yet I would like you to tell me exactly how everything stands, and what is left to us."

"You must leave everything in the house just as it is: only your wearing apparel and Philip's, your jewelry and private papers, can you take with you. Everything else must remain."

Mr. Lancaster speaks in the low, hushed voice we are used to hear in a sick room or where a corpse is lying. He has been too long a friend of the family not to feel sorrow and mortification in telling Hortense that everything has passed out of her hands, and he would be angry with Philip if Philip could be an object now of any feeling but pity.

"Is there nothing left for Philip?" asks Hortense after a little pause.

"A little, a very little. Just something to eke out your income with—hardly a help, though. I am glad I was too late when I tried to pay off the mortgage with your money. It would have been only swallowed up in the general ruin. There has been fearful waste and mismanagement, and—"

But Hortense interrupts him with a question, for she cannot bear now to hear Philip blamed, however justly: "Where do you advise me to go?"

She needs his counsel, for without it she would be like one set down on the roadside with no shelter near at hand.

"Bridgeford would be the most convenient place, I should suppose."

Hortense winces at this. Bridgeford she would hardly have chosen to live in. And yet Philip cannot be moved very far, and she does not know any other place well enough to say it will suit them better.

"Will you try lodgings?" Mr. Lan-

caster asks, thinking, as Hortense makes no objection to Bridgeford, she is satisfied to live there.

"No: it would never do, on Philip's account."

"You will hardly be able to furnish. Suppose you take a furnished house to begin with?"

"That will be my best plan. A furnished house will save me a great deal of worry and trouble, and I cannot leave Philip for very long at a time just now."

"Then let me procure the direction from an agent of such furnished houses as are to be had. Then we can see which will suit you best, and I will come for you and we will go and judge of them. I will try to come for you to-morrow."

"Better take a house at once. Its cheapness will be recommendation enough for me."

She thinks of saying something about the situation on Philip's account. But she checks herself, for fear any suggestion on her part may hamper Mr. Lancaster.

But he will not hear of choosing a house for her. She must see and judge for herself in such an important matter. And it is arranged that he will come for her to-morrow in his carriage, and show her the houses recommended by the agent which are within her means.

They fall into silence now that their business is over. Hortense is thinking how Philip will bear the move and the new home—whether he will miss familiar objects and grow sad under the change. And Mr. Lancaster is thinking of days long passed, when Hortense's grandfather and he were friends, and Aytoun was a pleasure and delight to him.

"I have been in and out of this old home ever since I was a boy," he says at last. "Eight generations of the Dunbars have lived and died here—have had all of life's sorrows and joys within these walls."

Hortense looks up at the pictures hanging round—pictures she has seen from her babyhood—glances up at the one Grace Robson admired so much for

the gloss on the satin dress and for the Spanish point; and Hortense wonders if any of those ancestors of hers had in all their lives such sorrow as she has had in the last few weeks. But they smile at her as if they knew nothing of heart-troubles, or would keep them to themselves.

"I have done my best to keep ruin from the house, but it was impossible," Mr. Lancaster resumes.

"Philip came too young into the property—before he knew enough of management," Hortense replies. "All his extravagances have been more from want of judgment than from any fault of his."

She is eager to defend him, for who else is there to say a word for him? And Mr. Lancaster is not one to find pleasure in crushing the pale girl before him with the history of Philip Dunbar's mismanagement and debts.

"It does not matter much whose fault it is that the old place must change hands. I never expect to cross the threshold after you leave it. Henceforth, Aytoun will be an unknown place to me."

"There will be other friends, I hope, to its owners, but never as true a one as we have found in you," Hortense says gratefully.

Mr. Lancaster has risen to go. There is nothing to converse about except business or the leaving of the old home, and both are trying subjects to Hortense. And besides, she is not sure Philip is not awake and wanting her; so she does not press her old friend to stay.

She follows him into the hall, to the door, to see him drive off. On the threshold he stops to answer a question she has put to him with just a little quiver in the voice which she has failed quite to steady: "Who is master of old Aytoun now?"

"Gerald Alston," Mr. Lancaster answers briefly.

"And he is well again?"

"Perfectly recovered, as if by a miracle. The doctor ascribes it to the timely binding up of his wound by some good Samaritan, who stopped there in his work, however, and, unlike the one in

the Bible, left the wounded man on the roadside. Some think that Alston himself had presence of mind enough to bind up the wound, as his own handkerchief was used for the purpose. He has not the slightest recollection of doing it, but that may be accounted for by his losing all consciousness afterward. The men who found him and brought him to Bridgeford in their wagon thought they were handling a corpse."

Gerald Alston well and strong again, and saved perhaps by her hand! Hortense is very thankful to hear such news of the master of Aytoun. If she and Philip must go out of these doors, it is at least without the stain of blood on their name. Gerald Alston is well and strong, able to enjoy his new possessions. She stands there comforted by this thought, and Mr. Lancaster is pitying her, believing she is only feeling the full bitterness of giving up the old home into the hold of a stranger.

If Philip had tried to rob Gerald Alston of his life, was it not by Hortense's hand it was saved to him? But she does not think of this, or thinks only, thankfully, of the mercy vouchsafed to that simple act of hers—the mercy of freeing Philip's hand from blood-guiltiness.

After this several notes pass between Mr. Lancaster and Hortense in reference to her future home. Furnished houses are not often to be met with in Bridgeford, for it is only when the death or removal of the head of the family occurs that renting the furniture also is ever resorted to.

So Mr. Lancaster, after many delays and disappointments, has only succeeded in hearing of one house within Hortense's means, and the agent tells him that it is small and meanly furnished, and the situation disagreeable—not at all suited to the Dunbars. But Hortense writes to take the house by all means. She is in haste to leave Aytoun—in haste that Gerald Alston should have possession.

Mr. Lancaster will not take it until Hortense sees it for herself, and he writes that he will send his carriage for her.

So she is obliged to give her decision, for her friend calls for her himself.

It is the first time in her life that Hortense has ever preferred a close carriage. But now she gladly draws back into the farthest corner, where she can neither see nor be seen.

But Mr. Lancaster thinks it is kinder to try to draw off her thoughts a little from herself. So he begins with inquiries about Philip, for which Hortense is grateful, and she rouses herself to talk. She hears his copious regrets over the damage the storm did on that night she never closed her eyes, and yet never heard the wind which wrought the mischief. And she points out which trees are down and which are broken and injured.

Outside the gate there are other places to point out, but Mr. Lancaster is cicerone now. He is sure he knows the spot where Gerald Alston was shot—on the very night of the storm, too—and is anxious that Hortense should lean forward to see it the better. He is a quarter of a mile out of the way, but she does not correct him with her superior knowledge, but lets him talk on uninterrupted, as he wonders who Gerald Alston's enemy could have been. It was odd there should be no trace, and that even Gerald himself has no idea who shot him, or, if he knows, chooses to remain silent on the subject.

"It has made a dreadful coward, I fear, of Mrs. Alston," Mr. Lancaster adds. "She cannot get over a dread she has that Gerald will be brought home to her dead some day—that his enemy is on the watch for him. She behaved well enough at the time, I believe. But that is very often the case with you women. You are more nervous after a danger is over than at the moment."

Hortense knows how idle the mother's fears are. If Mrs. Alston knew it was Philip Dunbar she is nervous about, she would lose all dread. But as Hortense is silent, Mr. Lancaster never suspects how much of the mystery of the attempt on Gerald Alston's life the girl sitting next to him can disclose.

They are driving through the streets

of Bridgeford now, and it is not so easy to keep up a conversation rattling over cobble-stones, scarcely able to hear your own voice. So Mr. Lancaster gives up all attempt to beguile Hortense's thoughts away from her trouble by his talk.

They are not very far from Grace Robson's house. Her carriage is before the door, and Grace, brilliant in wine-colored silk and plumes, has just seated herself in it, and is giving some directions to the coachman. Involuntarily, Hortense thinks of Philip, and how Grace and Aytoun have both slipped through his grasp, and without regret on his part.

Hortense has drawn even farther back into the corner of the carriage. She does not care to meet Grace to-day, of all others, when she is seeking a new home. But they do not drive past Grace's, but have turned into a side street. With one turn more they have stopped before the row of tenement-houses, and Hortense sees, with almost a shudder, that Mr. Lancaster is giving directions to his driver to ring the bell of one of the houses—that which she once felt a passing interest in because of the bit of black which hung from the bell-handle.

Her half-idle curiosity that morning must be answered now. The dead one must have been of some importance there, or the house and furniture would not be to let. Some of the family comfort has evidently died also.

The mistress of the house is ready to show Hortense and Mr. Lancaster the rooms, and she is very eager that the young lady should be pleased with everything. To her all is beyond commendation, and it is a trial to give up such good furniture into the hands of any one. To be sure, this lady, she hears, has only a sick brother, and she inclines to her as a tenant. There will be no children to scratch and spoil the furniture.

So she leads the way into the small, close room she dignifies as parlor, and which she seems to regard with special pride. The hard-stuffed horsehair sofa, devised to torture weary ones, never to rest them; the half dozen stiff-backed

chairs, covered with the same chilly material; a round table with a flaming red cover on it; a well-blackened stove, guiltless of fire; even the rows of photographs which hang on the wall, suspended by long red cords—caricatures of faces which even the flattering brush of a painter could never make handsome; the large red-and-green pattern of the thin ingrain carpet,—each and every one of these the mistress of the house shows with pride and evident satisfaction.

Mr. Lancaster groans aloud as he sees Hortense standing in this poor room listening to the woman's commendations of her possessions. Hortense in her dainty beauty amongst such poor vulgarity! It is like hanging a Madonna by one of the old masters amongst the woman's ugly kindred.

Hortense never groans for herself, but listens graciously to the woman's self-complacent talk, tries at her request the softness of the sofa—which slides her off viciously—examines the draught of the stove, though she is no wiser when she hears how good it is, there being no such ugly thing in the old home at Aytoun. She looks, too, at the plain face of the departed master, and makes kind inquiries for the children. And the woman finds no cause to blush for her poor furniture, and never suspects that the lady has a finer and more luxurious home than she. Has had, for Aytoun is no longer Hortense's home.

There are other rooms to show, but evidently not so fine in their mistress's eye, yet larger and capable of being rendered more habitable. Hortense hopes, by a judicious moving of the furniture and some small additions, Philip may be made comfortable, and that he will not miss old Aytoun after a little while. And Mr. Lancaster is surprised to find she is satisfied and ready to come to terms with the woman for immediate possession.

"We shall do very well," she assures Mr. Lancaster cheerfully. "Some bright chintz and a few pretty chromos will make a wonderful difference in the appearance of things: you will not know

this room when you come to see Philip, and he will not miss Aytoun very long," she adds, with a sad fall in her voice.

After this Hortense is in haste to get her flitting over. There is nothing to do at Aytoun but to burn old papers and pack the clothing. Some of her jewelry she will sell to buy the chintz and chromos: the rest she will keep until she needs money more than she does just now.

Those letters Grace once drove to Aytoun for, and after all left behind her, Hortense finds thrown carelessly in one of the pigeonholes of Philip's desk, and she sends them back to Grace without a line or message. Philip has no need of such an earnest of a past love, as he once said he would keep them for; and to Hortense they are very valueless.

And so, walking out of the old home flooded with the winter sunshine, with everything around her just as she has seen it all her life, very much as if she were going only to return in a few hours, Hortense is forced to leave Aytoun.

The pictures are on the walls where the Dunbars have always had the right to be. The silver glitters on the old oak sideboard. Even the silver tankard stands in its place on the hall table, where in days of ague and miasma it had always been kept full of our grandfathers' specific against such disorders—mint-julep, which, if not as efficacious as quinine, was at least more palatable. But now its lid is closed, and it is to be for ever empty of its legitimate contents.

The old dog on the door-mat looks up as Hortense goes out. But he does not offer to follow the carriage, for in his experience Hortense has always come back, and he is too stiff for a needless run.

Philip does not like to be moved. He would rather be left where he is, and Hortense's full attention has to be given to soothe and coax him into believing he is pleased with the drive. And so she never heeds when she passes out of the iron gate of Aytoun—to her as much closed as Eden was to our common mother. But no angel guards this gate; only, Gerald Alston owns it.

There is one familiar face to welcome Hortense to the tenement-house near Blidale Mill, one familiar voice to speak to her; for the younger of the servants has asked to follow her mistress into her new home, and Hortense has gladly taken her.

There is some comfort, too, in seeing that Philip is contented with her arrangements, and that he does not seem to miss Aytoun. At times the shrill whistle of Blidale Mill will call out a fretful complaint, but it does not bring with it any association with Grace Robson.

Only a feeble ray of sunshine ever struggles into the windows of Philip's room. It does its best to contend with the dismal back-buildings and chimneys which would fain shut it out altogether, and it manages to do double duty in lighting up the pale pink lining of the chintz curtains and the cheerful pictures hanging around. Philip is as fond of the sunbeam as any child could be, and watches it with delight as it dances now on Hortense's hair, warming it into a golden brown, and then on his own thin, pale hands.

Hortense is as blithe as a bird may be in its new nest, sings to Philip and talks gayly to him, brings out the backgammon-board, and has no end of expedients to while away the time for him. Yet with all her strivings there is a sad look in her eyes which tells of a constant effort, and which those who know her best never remember to have seen there in the days which are past.

In a little week Philip seems to have forgotten there was ever any other life save the one he now lives in the back room of the tenement-house near Blidale Mill. Whether Hortense dwells on other days no one can tell. She has no one to talk to about them but Philip, and he has lost everything save a dim memory of Aytoun.

At night there is not a sound to break the stillness of the street Philip Dunbar and Hortense have found their new home in, except the passing step now and then of some belated tippler coming from the neighboring tavern. All the population around them is too weary with the hard

day's work not to be thankful for the boon of sleep.

But in the street whose back-buildings shut off from them the sunshine and the fresh air which should be theirs, there is the rolling of carriage-wheels and the sound of soft stringed music. The bright light from one of the houses has caused many of the passers-by to halt and to ask what is going on.

It is a wedding, they say, which has made more stir than has been known in Bridgeford since the panic in the cotton-mills many years ago. For not only is Grace Robson, the bride, an heiress who has broken many hearts in Bridgeford, but Gerald Alston, the bridegroom, has just risen from a bed most thought his deathbed, and the curiosity has not died out yet as to the person who shot him, and why the act was done.

Yes, Grace Robson has married Gerald Alston to-night, and she looks pretty in her orange blossoms and diamonds, her glistening silk and soft laces. Very lovely and a fitting mistress for Aytoun, most persons think. All, indeed, except Mr. Lancaster and a few old-fashioned ones, who contend that Hortense's reign there was perfect.

That Gerald Alston bought up the mortgage on Aytoun everybody knows, as well as that he got the property very cheap. He is a lucky fellow, to step into such a house all furnished, with even the silver on the sideboard and the saucepans in the kitchen. Certainly he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and he is not one to care much if it chances to have a Dunbar cipher upon its handle.

So Grace Robson's ambition is satisfied. Whether she will ever miss the handsome eyes which so often held her captive, sometimes against her will; whether she will ever blush as she has to explain that the courtly gentlemen and beautiful women hanging on her walls are not hers by blood or marriage, only by purchase; whether she will ever feel that Aytoun has lost all its old reputation, and will soon be only the handsome residence of the owner of Blidale Mill,—we cannot say. But she

will be wise enough not to complain, and no one need know whether she has paid dear for her gratification or not.

And Bryan Bonham, is he too dancing at Grace Robson's wedding? No: Bryan is not a guest here. He is keeping a somewhat sorrowful watch by the bed of his grandfather to-night. Not such an all-engrossing one, though, that he can't give some bitter thoughts to Hortense. He knows she has left Aytoun. But she has made her choice—his name and home, or Philip's—and, having chosen, she must abide by it.

Bryan thinks he could have forgiven most things, but it was not in his nature to stand being put last where he should be first. It is not in the nature of most of Adam's sons.

Hortense's just duty, he argues, was to him, and as she failed even to love him better than her brother, he would keep his vow and crowd her out of his heart—that heart which for two years was hers only.

If Bryan finds other women a little wearying, and in time love-making insipid and a mere waste of words, the fault must be in himself. Let him fight his battle, but whether conqueror or conquered, it would be better to essay his armor before he makes boast of it.

CHAPTER XII.

Only my heart to my heart shall show it,
As I walk desolate day by day.

MORE than a year has passed, and Grace Alston is queening it at Aytoun a little more royally than she did as Grace Robson at Bridgeford. Gerald is the important moneyed man of the county, for Blidale Mill has coined money lately under his judicious management. Any one could tell he was a good man of business, since he bought Aytoun for such a song, and it is worth more than it ever was, now that Bridgeford is growing out to its very gate.

Hortense lives on the life she has chosen with Philip, in the small tenement-house near Blidale Mill—with Philip, a man in stature, but needing the same care as a child.

Bryan Bonham has come back to Bridgeford to settle some affairs before he leaves the town altogether and takes possession of the new home he has inherited by his grandfather's death.

Bridgeford has made rapid strides in improvement in the past year. Gerald Alston has given business such an impetus by his fortunate speculations that mill upon mill has been built in the town, until the din of machinery has drowned all other sounds.

Even the pretty river, the young people used to be fond of forming pleasure-parties to visit, has lost all its picturesque-ness, and its waters, forced from their bed where they used to leap gayly over the rocks, flow now with smooth swiftness into the narrow races, and at last do good service in turning the heavy mill-wheels.

Bryan has been some weeks in Bridgeford, and he has never sought out Hortense, nor even tried to hear of her, though it is more than a year since he parted from her on that early winter's morning. His wrath is in no way appeased, and he flatters himself that the past is as nothing to him, and that he could pass Hortense in the street and never feel a flutter of the pulse at the sight of her.

Perhaps he is right, and the old love can die out easily, or else Heaven help many of the men and women in the world! Few win and keep the first fresh love, and so it is to be hoped that but few hearts are true to it longer than the birds are to their mates.

Gerald Alston has met Bryan more than once in Bridgeford, and has pressed him to come to Aytoun; and Grace has shown by a somewhat stiff little bow from her fine carriage that she is offended at his neglect. For, as I said, she is queening it at old Aytoun, and she expects due homage from all her acquaintance. So, in spite of a pressure of business he would fain plead as an excuse, and a shrinking he has from going to Hortense's old home, he determines to do his duty and call.

Perhaps if Grace still lived in Bridgeford he would not consider himself in

duty bound to go and see her, and he would only have been amused at her pretty airs. But as she lives at Aytoun, and as he does not intend that it shall have any hold on his heart, or even on his memory, he is determined to make a martyr of himself, to prove by an odd contradiction that there is no pain in store for him in the visit.

Old Aytoun is looking very lovely in the bright June sunshine as Bryan opens the heavy gate and walks up the familiar avenue of oaks. Gerald has made some improvements in the grounds, but they are not in very good taste, and Nature would have done much better if left to her own graceful devices, instead of being shorn and trained by a landscape-gardener.

Bryan marks every change, even misses the trees the wind blew down a year ago last winter. And as he does not miss Hortense also as he stands at the door waiting to be let in to the house once so familiar to him, he thinks the old love is dead, and he can without a shudder step over its grave.

Grace welcomes him as a friend she is glad to see, even though he has been culpable in his neglect of her. And she soon proposes to take him to Gerald's sanctum, rather than to send for the busy man to come to her drawing-room, which he seldom visits.

It is the old smoking-room into which Grace ushers Bryan, where the latter has had many a cigar, as well as gay talk over some hunting-party Philip was always ready to head. Yet, if it were not for the locality of the room, Bryan could never guess he was in it. Ledgers have crowded out the sporting-books which used to lie about, and the guns and whips and spurs and pipes which once made a litter Hortense used to laugh at, but would never put to rights on account of these same guns, were all gone now—put into the garret, perhaps; for Gerald Alston is much too busy to care for the sports he liked well enough when he was struggling to climb the ladder which now he is ready to throw down, having stepped from the highest rung.

Bryan sees a picture of Mount Vernon

hanging over the mantel, where Philip's favorite race-horse used to be, and an oiled walnut hat-rack with Gerald's cipher in white beads on a crimson ground—Grace's work, no doubt—has taken the place of the huge deer-antlers which were wont to hang between the windows. There is nothing here to recall the past life at Aytoun, though much to tell of the rich, prosperous business-man of Bridgeford.

Gerald is busy writing, but puts down his pen when Grace brings Bryan in. He always gives the morning to his business correspondence, when he does not go into Bridgeford; but he can afford to put aside his letters and entertain an old acquaintance for a half hour. At first, the conversation is general enough, and Grace bears her part in it, but soon it drops into the improvements at Bridgeford, and labor-saving machinery, and the price of cotton, and the heavy taxes, and Grace keeps silent, not seeming to mind it, but as if used to being thrust out of the conversation.

Bryan feels no more interest in Gerald's topics than Grace seems to do. He thinks the vaunted improvements at Bridgeford rather questionable, but then he has no interest in any of its mills. So, whilst Gerald discourses without interruption, Bryan looks at the picture of Mount Vernon, at the white-bead cipher in the useless-looking hat-rack, and then glances at Grace herself, and thinks she has grown prettier since her marriage; which he rather wonders at, if she is used to such prosing as Gerald is favoring them with just now.

But Grace does not hold his glance, any more than Gerald does his attention; and Bryan's eyes rove round for something to rest on, until he is fascinated by a picture hanging on the wall—the sole remnant left of all Philip's old possessions. It is a picture of a fresh young face with brown eyes and hair—a face which has not changed since he last saw it, but which still looks saucily and smilingly at him, though he has said he never cared to set eyes on it again.

Bryan is not thinking of the price of cotton as Gerald talks on: he is wonder-

ing if Hortense looks now as she did when this picture was so wonderfully like her. Grace must be witch enough to read his thoughts, though perhaps she has only seen what he is looking at, for she says, "Have you seen Hortense since your return? She has sadly changed. No doubt she has a hard life of it, nursing her brother. They say he is little better than an idiot."

"I can't bear that face," Gerald says, glancing up at the saucy beauty smiling on him, which must be a little exasperating to him, seeing he ought never to have had it in his possession. "It always looks as if it were laughing at me."

"How did you ever get it?" Bryan asks wonderingly, knowing how much Philip used to prize the picture.

"It was in the house with the other things. I bought in everything as it stood. Of course a good deal of rubbish fell to my lot."

Bryan flushes angrily. He forgets how often he has said Hortense is nothing to him now. To see her picture hanging in Gerald Alston's room, and to hear it designated as rubbish—this his old love with her bonny face, smiling down on him just as she used to look when he came to Aytoun something more than a year ago—rouses his wrath.

She does not smile on him now, he thinks bitterly, any more than on Gerald Alston, whom she always disliked, or on Grace, whom she had a right to frown on as one who played false to Philip.

"Why do you keep the picture if you do not like it?" Bryan asks.

"Because I found it here, and I don't care for a blank wall to gaze at. When I can find something I like to fill its place, I will send my haughty lady to the garret," is Gerald's answer.

"Let me fill its place," Bryan says before he takes much thought. "I will exchange an Eastlake for it." He sees the look and smile which the husband and wife interchange, and adds: "Philip Dunbar may like to have the picture. He always thought it a good likeness, and certainly he ought to have it."

So it is a bargain, for Gerald is glad

to part with the sunny face which always seems to mock him, and a genuine East-lake is not so easily met with. But old Mr. Bonham, Bryan's grandfather, was a picture-fancier, and when in Europe had spent much time over his collection ; and there is not much fear of not getting a genuine painting if Bryan sends it.

Hortense's face smiling on him as she used to do has set Bryan thinking of the past. For the first time he wishes he had taken the hand she held out to him when they parted on the road, and that his parting bow had been less cold. Heretofore he has been a little proud of his demeanor on that occasion, but sitting in Philip's old room and bargaining for Hortense's picture, he feels a flush of shame, and wishes he had left himself a shadow of an excuse to go and see Philip, now that he is under the iron heel of misfortune.

Bryan is in haste to leave Aytoun. He will not stay to dinner, though Gerald presses him, and he excuses himself from going over Grace's hot-houses, which she is so fond of showing. The house stifles him, and he is anxious for the fresh air. But once more in the road, he does not turn toward Bridgeford, but strikes across the fields into a footpath. There is no sign of the white rime which covered the fields the last time he walked by the path. Instead are violets as blue as the sky above, and the golden disks of the dandelions.

Why was Hortense in such haste to get rid of his love on that winter's day ? —in such haste that she could hint at a crime, rather than not part from him. Where was she, that he had never heard her name mentioned until to-day ? How came it that she had died out of the knowledge of every one, though he knew she still lived in Bridgeford ? It was strange that they had never chanced to meet. Was he glad that they had not ?

If it was Philip, as he believed, who had separated them, and the coarse words Grace had used of her former lover were true, ought he not to forgive Hortense ? Had she not a life to lead that, bitterly as he felt toward her, he

must pity ? He had a great desire to see for himself whether that face had changed as much as Grace Alston said it had. Could the old love have done the work ? Was it through a weary looking-back on what she had let slip from her ?

His own love had been dead a year, he said—killed that winter's morning when he last walked through these fields. Dead ! and yet there was a pale ghost he could not lay offering him her hand, standing just there on the roadside. It was strange how this act of hers, which he once thought merited disdain, should haunt him to-day, and how he longed for a different parting, for then he would not hesitate, but could take Philip this picture, which he knew Philip would be glad to have again.

Where are not Bryan's thoughts wandering through the past as he walks on ? He has lost all control of them, and they leap wildly back from day to day, from week to week, from year to year. Only a little walk he would take over the fields this June morning, and he has ended at the cliffs which look down on the rapids ; or rather where the rapids once were, for the rocks are bare and silent now, only a little water trickles over them, and Bryan, if he chose, could cross to the opposite bank dryshod, jumping from rock to rock.

Standing here on the cliff, and glancing down on what had once been the bed of the river, Bryan remembers how he had seen Hortense tottering on the edge of this very rock he is standing on, and how he had held his breath in fear until he bethought himself to try and save her ; and of the relief he felt when he reached her and held her fast. If she had died then, if she had been crushed before his eyes, it would not have been half so bitter to him as to have lost her as he had.

Standing where Hortense did that day, Bryan looks over the cliff, wondering what she could have seen in the river to make her so careless of her life. Not what he is looking at now, for what was then a small whirlpool foaming and fretting between the rocks, is now only a

cleft between two rocks, and all the mysteries which used, to awe the Bridgeford boys are revealed to Bryan.

This empty pool surprises him, and he descends to the river-bank to examine it. But peering into it, he forgets the mystery of the raging waters in his anxiety to see a greater one lying in its depths—lying lodged tightly between two rocks. Bryan climbs down into the hole, slippery with green slime and moss—climbs down to pick up a somewhat odd thing to find in the bottom of such a pool, though it is only a pistol, very rusty, as if it had been a long time in the water. Rusty and very harmless now, no matter how many lives it has once ruined.

Useless as the pistol is, Bryan examines it curiously; finds it is still loaded, though the hammer is immovable from rust; sees, too, there is a silver plate with a name on it, rusted also almost past deciphering. And yet by close scanning he manages to read the name of Philip Dunbar.

Even then, with the pistol in his hand, the truth does not flash on Bryan. It must come to him by a slower process, and yet there is a sort of fascination about the pistol he cannot understand—a desire to find out how Philip could have dropped it into the pool.

Bryan clammers again to the top of the cliff, and stands where Hortense did and looks over. Then he throws a stone over, but it goes crashing down the side of the cliff and into the bed of the river at its foot. He leans over as far as he dares, and drops another stone into the hole where the whirlpool once boiled and fretted, and where he had just found the pistol.

Why should Hortense throw the pistol into the pool? he questions anxiously, as if that answered he might at last grasp the mystery of her early walk, as well as of what she had said to him in the fields.

Hortense with her nervous fear of any kind of firearms—why had she carried this pistol so far to hide it from all human sight?

Bryan has no doubt now that Hor-

tense threw the pistol where he has just found it, and he tries to think what day it was he saw her standing where he now stands. His sitting up with Gerald Alston the night before will help him if he needs any help to recall the day and month he lost all claim to Hortense. Gerald Alston wounded almost to death near the gate of Aytoun—is this a clew to help him out of this maze? Gerald Alston, the owner of Aytoun now, the husband of Philip's old love—had Philip foreseen this end, and did he seek to frustrate it, even by blood.

Had not Hortense said that day, "A sin concealed was not the less black," and that "she would not hurt his name by marrying him"? And he had deemed her mad for a moment! Mad, poor love! in her endeavor to hide a brother's guilt! And Bryan groans aloud in this his certainty. If they were to be separated, if she would fain have it so for his sole good, why should he with his bitter, cruel words have made it the harder for her?

Bryan puts the pistol into his pocket and turns with hasty steps to walk to Bridgeford. He is going to find Hortense. Perhaps the heart which could so love a brother in his sin, and never flinch from him, could also forgive Bryan's hard, harsh words, his unkind doubt of her. At least he can but try. And the old love has not died out of his heart, as he thought it had, for he is in hot haste to hear Hortense's voice, and to tell her he has wronged her.

Though Philip and Hortense Dunbar have lived all their lives within a mile of Bridgeford, and were as well known there as Grace Alston is now, yet they have died out of the memory of most people, and Bryan cannot find them as easily as he thought he could.

Some one tells him they live near Bliedale Mill; and, hoping that the direction is right, he sets out in his search. There is nothing in any of the houses in the long, dull row which hints to him of Hortense. Hortense, fastidious and dainty to a fault in the past days, could never find a home in these poor houses, all looking alike, except that

here and there one is a little tidier than its neighbor, yet nothing better than any operative of Blidale might claim.

Failing to find Hortense here, Bryan turns to walk past the block of houses again which he has been scanning hopelessly for a hint of Hortense. He had much better have gone to Mr. Lancaster's at first for certain information. He wonders he did not think of this old friend and business-man of the family.

At the corner Bryan pauses and looks along the long row of houses again, as if loth to leave, even though he believes his information is at fault—pauses and sees a woman's figure dressed in black standing on one of the doorsteps. Catching sight of her, he turns quickly and walks down the street again toward where she stands. But her face is turned from him, and before he reaches her the door opens for her, and she goes in without seeing him.

A moment after and Bryan's hand is on the lock. He opens the door hastily, as if afraid of losing her, and finds himself face to face with Hortense. The entry is too small and dark for him to see her when he shuts the door behind him, and Hortense might have been startled at his unceremonious entrance if she had not recognized his eager, anxious face as he came in.

So she leads the way into the little parlor, where stand ranged against the wall the stiff, ungainly chairs and the torturing sofa opposite the grim, ugly stove. Even the family photographs hang by their red cords upon the wall. Nothing has been touched since Mr. Lancaster first brought Hortense here and she decided to take the house.

Hortense spends her days in Philip's room, and very rarely comes into this one. But Bryan knows nothing of this, and, coming as he does from Aytoun, he feels the difference keenly. But he soon forgets her poor surroundings when he looks at her face. Why had Grace Alston told him he would find her changed?

Hortense does not hold out her hand to tell him he is welcome. Perhaps she has not forgotten their parting, and that he

then refused to touch it. But Bryan is thinking little of mere courtesies just now, and he says at once, with some reproach in his voice, "Hortense, why did you not trust me that bitter day we parted? Was it because I was not worthy of it?"

"What should I have trusted you with?" she asks uneasily.

"With Philip's secret. I have been to the rapids to-day, dreaming of you—you whom I thought dead to me. Everything is changed there, as I find it is everywhere else: even the whirlpool is dried up—"

Bryan stops here, and Hortense looks at him for a moment anxiously, and then drops her eyes, as if she knew the uneasy light that is in them. But she does not speak, and he goes on to say: "In the crevice of a rock in the whirlpool I have found Philip's pistol."

She glances at the pistol with a half-frightened glance. But she conquers the feeling, and says quietly, "Philip is past all hurting now by my silence or my words. You will find him changed since you last saw him."

"And yet, for all the change, I can find it in my heart to envy him, as he has you."

"It is his sole comfort, as it is all he has left to him."

But Bryan will not take the evident meaning of her words, and asks, "Have I wronged you past all forgiveness, Hortense?"

"No," she answers. "You could not help your mistrust of me. Our parting was my fault, or rather it was my necessity. It was a heavy secret for a girl to keep. There seemed no help for me save in your mistrusting me, and I was forced to bear it as best I could."

"I should have had more faith in you, and have taken your word that you were in the right until you chose to speak more plainly. It is easy enough to see it now that I have it all so plainly before me," Bryan says penitently.

"It was too great a tax on most men's trust. I have never blamed you, so you should not blame yourself."

"You do not blame me, but you have ceased to love me, Hortense?"

She smiles, a little, just a little, wearily, and does not answer his question, but asks, "Will you come and see Philip?"

"Not yet. Do not torture me, Hortense, but tell me—is there no hope for me?"

"Philip must be my answer. When you see him you will know I cannot leave him."

"And I will never ask you to do so. Let Philip come also: this is no place for him or for you. I have a home for both of you."

"You do not know, Bryan, how very sad it is," she says with a little tremor in her voice. "You cannot think how changed Philip is. It is not with him as it is with most who are stricken down. I seldom leave him night or day."

"But it cannot be necessary," Bryan interposes quickly. "It must be a living death to you."

"The dead are happy, and they do not care to live the common life of flesh and blood," she replies.

But he will not let her off so easily, and urges: "Hortense, I will promise that Philip shall have all your thoughts and time—I only the mere surplus any of your acquaintances could have. Only do not let us separate again."

She does not say, "Love me as in the old time, but leave me here to Philip." She knows he would never be content to see her daily and never press her coming to him. Indeed, she is not sure it would be kind to him, to hold him by a bond which would be sure to weary him from its very hopelessness. And she must form no tie which will weaken Philip's claim on her. Hortense sees with a woman's quick instinct where these two loves would clash—that neither Bryan nor Philip would be satisfied with her best endeavors. And feeling this, she says, "There are some who, finding two duties, cannot tell which of them to choose. God keep them from erring in their choice! Mine is an easier lot, because the path before me is plain. You will not blame me if I never stumble at a doubt, and stay with Philip?"

"It is my own fault," Bryan says bit-

terly. "If I had not let you go that day I met you at the rapids, you would have no choice now, for I would have had the stronger claim on you, and I would hold you by it. Was it kind of you to let me wreck my future so utterly and never give me a warning?"

She answers nothing to excuse herself. It is very bitter to her to know her hand has had to push him from her. The weariest trial on earth is where two loves draw in different ways, and our commonest acts become a question of right and wrong to one or other. Hortense knows this, and would fain avoid it—not for herself, but for Bryan and Philip.

"Let us go to Philip," she urges again, as if in his room she would find sanctuary.

But Bryan stands before the door and faces her, leaning against it. "Hortense," he says deprecatingly, "you cannot expect me to give you up now. When I thought you false and fickle I could strive to do so, though Heaven knows I made but small headway with all my efforts! It was hard to live the common life when I thought I had a certainty to help me, but now you might as well ask me to give up the air we breathe, and yet live on."

She does not answer him. He can plainly read if he will, the mute appeal in her eyes. Why will he not take the inevitable in silence, and not torture her? But he will fight for her to the bitter end, or perhaps he misreads her silence, for he says quickly, "You cannot doom me to such a life. I need you as much as Philip."

If he had been her enemy she might have taunted him by reminding him how little mercy he had shown her not much more than a year ago. But as he is her lover, and her heart has never swerved from him while knowing he misjudged her, she has the double pain of gainsaying him and of seeming cold.

"I do not doom you, Bryan, but a fate so sad that if I did not pray daily to a common Father I should think myself uncared for and fatherless. And yet it may be a merciful hand which keeps me from you. For see, Bryan, though Phil-

ip did not do the actual deed I tried to hide the only witness to, it was only God's mercy that kept him from it. Out of the heart comes all sin: it does not lie in the action only. That God can and will forgive it I believe firmly, and I go daily to church and say, by way of comfort, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sin,' knowing how Christ bought the gift for us. But the taint sin brings is on Philip still, and on me as his sister. In the olden days there were cities of refuge where the guilty fled who did not come under the full penalty of the law, and they led lives separate from the rest of their kind. I suppose the innocent lived there apart from the old life. The mother and sister must have followed the banished one, and the child and toddling infant must have played in the streets, unconscious that they lived a life different from the rest of the world."

"But those were in the old, hard Israelitish days," Bryan says. "In these we do not banish from us all who sin as Philip has done. You are too morbid by far, Hortense."

"Philip is banished out of the reach of every one but me—you cannot tell how utterly until you see him."

"Then let me share it with both of you. I will never mind it, nor prove a coward to anything but the fear of losing you," Bryan pleads.

"It would be worse to you than losing me," she says, "for then you would be forced to go back into the old life, but this would irk and crush you. I can never let you do it."

She is looking at him through a mist of tears. Perhaps even now Bryan does not despair of winning her, when a sharp, querulous voice calls, "Hortense!"

She does not move, but only says, "Philip is calling me."

"Let him call for once," Bryan replies quickly. "Just now hear me only. Philip cannot need you as I do, cannot love you as I have done. He never hesitated between Grace Robson and you—never feared to crush you with his sin. He must bear the consequences, and let me have you. Not that I would part you—that I will never do," he adds hastily,

seeing a look coming into her eyes which makes him uneasy and fearful whether it had not been better not to have mentioned Philip's name at all.

"I never minded being set aside by Philip for another, as it was but natural I should be in time," Hortense answers. "And I was never crushed, except on the day I met you at the rapids. I know you do not now mean to separate me from Philip, but you could not help it in time if your claim upon me were the stronger of the two. I must never place myself in any position where Philip has not the first right to me."

Again comes the call for "Hortense!"—a discontented, weary cry, such as a sick child might give for his mother. And Hortense, hearing it, moves toward the door, never seeming to see that Bryan bars her way. He steps aside to let her pass, knowing he has no right to hold her back.

"Will you not come?" she asks; and Bryan follows her into a larger and more cheerful room, where all the comforts and luxuries of the house seem gathered. But he does not notice this just now, for he only sees Hortense bending over a couch, and he is struck with the wonderful likeness between Philip and his sister—a likeness Bryan resents as an injustice to Hortense.

"It is Bryan, Philip," she is saying—"Bryan Bonham. Are you not glad to see him?"

"Is it he who kept you so long?" Philip asks fretfully. "Give Bryan a chair, Hortense. Why do you keep him standing?"

There is a mixture of the old Dunbar courtesy to guests and of childishness which strikes Bryan painfully. But Hortense does not appear to heed it. She has been constantly in this room for more than a year now, and this is Bryan's first visit.

There comes a hope to Bryan, as he watches Hortense, that if he can win Philip to his side, in that way he may gain Hortense. So he says, "I came to see if you are not weary of living here, and if a change to the country would not do you good. I have a pleasant

home I could take you to—a home like—like—”

“Aytoun,” Hortense puts in, taking up his words. “You remember Aytoun, Philip?”

“Of course I remember Aytoun—where the Dunbars have always lived. Does Bryan live there?”

“No,” Bryan answers; “only my home is somewhat like it. Would you not like to try what change can do, and come to see me?”

“No,” Philip says. “There is something wrong at Aytoun. We are better here than there. I might lose Hortense if I left, and I’ll not risk that. Do you think she will have to leave me?” he asks uneasily, turning to Bryan. “It would be hard on both of us, for there are only the two of us now.”

Hortense kneels beside Philip and rests her head on his shoulder, and his hand moves softly over her hair, as he says, with something of the wail of a child, to Bryan, “You will not separate us? you will not take Hortense from me? There are only the two of us left: you will not take her?”

What can Bryan say? He sees he might as well bid Hortense leave a child alone on the roadside as leave Philip. And he feels he could never watch her living this life with any patience. She in her youth to be so chained! He does not quite take in the love which makes her bonds endurable.

After that there is not much conversation. Hortense tries to bring back to Philip some remembrance of Bryan and of the past, and Bryan watches and listens, and wonders at her patience, as men often wonder at the patience women show to the whims and caprices of a sick child. He even thinks angrily of her having chosen this life, rather than the one his love would fain make for her.

There is no use in lingering, and Bryan rises to go. Hortense holds out her

hand in mute farewell, standing at Philip’s side. Philip looks so pale and wan Bryan cannot help thinking he may not always claim Hortense’s care, and that in time she may need a stronger hand to sustain her.

Let him take the thought with him if it lightens his present load. Philip’s life is not such that even Hortense would pray for it to be prolonged, though she will do her best to help him bear it. But death seldom comes soon when the body has wrecked the mind. The future is shut to both of them: let them take the present patiently.

For Hortense there is no fear. She will bear her lot bravely and cheerfully, whatever it may chance to be, for in the path of duty there is never a lack of help.

If Bryan should at any time lose the hope he has taken just now to heart, and, growing weary of a long waiting and his dull, lonely life, should take a wife by way of mending it, she will find amongst his treasures two things which will tax her curiosity and astuteness sadly.

One is a pistol, tarnished and rusted, and certainly useless, with a silver plate and a name on it—Philip Dunbar. No one she knows or will ever chance to know.

The other treasure he guards carefully is the picture of a young girl—a wonderfully beautiful face, with sweet brown eyes, and a mouth which seems made for smiling. If, like Cinderella’s prince, who went from house to house to find a match for the glass slipper, she too would find a counterpart of that pictured face, she will be sure to fail, though she journeys the world over. She may discover one pair of sad eyes which are of the same color, but neither eyes nor mouth wearing the same gay smile; and Bryan will never tell her what it was that killed the mirth out of them.





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TOO STRANGE NOT TO BE TRUE.

A T A L E.

BY

LADY GEORGIANA FULLERTON,

AUTHORESS OF "ELLEN MIDDLETON," "LADYBIRD, &C.

THREE VOLUMES IN ONE.



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INTRODUCTION.

IN the following tale, the scene of which is laid in countries, and amidst persons, whose language was not our own, there has been no attempt to adopt the phraseology of the epoch over which these events extend. There did not seem any particular object in rendering the thoughts and conversations of German and French people in the English of the eighteenth, rather than of the nineteenth, century.

Truth and fiction are closely blended in this tale, and in the Appendix will be found the materials from whence some of its incidents have been drawn—as also the narrative which has furnished its ground-work. Those who are sometimes glad to turn away for a while from the beaten roads of history, and to tread the bye-ways of romance—who love truth which resembles fiction, and fiction which follows closely in the footsteps of truth—may, perhaps, find some little interest in this story of the last century.

“Full of hope, and yet of heart-break;
Of the here, and the hereafter.”

Legend of Hiawatha.

TOO STRANGE NOT TO BE TRUE.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

The woods! O solemn are the boundless woods
Of the great western world when day declines;
And louder sounds the roll of distant floods,
More deep the rustling of the ancient pines,
When dimness gathers on the stilly air,
And mystery seems on every leaf to brood:
Awful it is for human heart to bear
The weight and burthen of the solitude.

Mrs. Hemans.

White she is as Lily of June,
And beauteous as the silver moon,
When out of sight the clouds are driven,
And she is left alone in heaven.

* * * * *

I did not speak—I saw her face:
Her face! it was enough for me!
I turned about and heard her cry,
“O misery! O misery!”

Wordsworth.

IN the earlier part of the last century, through one of the primeval forests of the New World, northward of the region which the French colonists called the Eden of Louisiana, a man was walking one evening with his gun on his shoulder, followed by two dogs of European breed, a spaniel and a bloodhound. The rays of the setting sun were gilding the vast sea of flowers lying to his right beyond the limits of the wood through which he was making his way, impeded every moment by the cords of the slender liana and entangled garlands of Spanish moss. The firmness of his step, the briskness of his movements, the vigour of his frame, his keen eye and manly bearing,

and above all the steady perseverance with which he pursued the path he had chosen, and forced his way through all obstacles, indicated a physical and moral temperament well fitted to cope with the many difficulties inherent to the life of a settler in the Nouvelle France.

Henri d'Auban had been a dweller in many lands—had lived in camps and in courts, and held intercourse with persons of every rank in most of the great cities of Europe. He was thirty-five years of age at the time this story opens, and had been in America about four years. Brittany was his native country; his parental home a small castle on the edge of a cliff overlook-

ing one of the wildest shores of that rude coast. The sea-beach had been his playground; its weeds, its shells, its breaking waves, his toys; the boundless expanse of the ocean and its great ceaseless voice, the endless theme of his secret musings; and the pious legends of the Armorican race, the nursery tales he had heard from his mother's lips. Brittany, like Scotland, is "a meet nurse for a poetic child," and her bold peasantry have retained to this day very much of the religious spirit of their forefathers. Early in life Henri d'Auban lost both his parents—the small-pox, the plague of that epoch in France, having carried them both off within a few days of each other. He saw them buried in the little churchyard of Keir Anna, and was placed soon after by some of his relations at the college of Vannes, where he remained several years.

On leaving it he began life with many friends, much youthful ambition, and very little fortune. Through the interest of a great-uncle, who had been a distinguished officer in Marshal Turenne's army, he was appointed military attaché to the French Embassy at Vienna, and served as volunteer in some of the Austrian campaigns against the Turks. He visited also in the Ambassador's service several of the smaller courts of Germany, and was sent on a secret mission to Italy. On his way through Switzerland he accidentally made acquaintance with General Lefort, the Czar of Muscovy's confidential friend and admirer. That able man was not long in discovering the more than ordinary abilities of the young Breton gentleman. By his advice, and through his interest, Henry d'Auban entered the Russian service, advanced rapidly from post to post, and was often favourably noticed by Peter the Great. He seemed as likely to attain a high position at that monarch's

court as any foreigner in his service. His knowledge of military science, and particularly of engineering, having attracted the sovereign's attention on several occasions when he had accompanied General Lefort on visits of military inspection, the command of a regiment and the title of Colonel were bestowed upon him. But just as his prospects appeared most brilliant, and his favour with the Emperor was visibly increasing, he secretly left Russia and returned to France. Secrecy was a necessary condition of departure in the case of foreigners in the Czar's service. However high in his favour, and indeed by reason of that favour they were no longer free agents—his most valued servants being only privileged serfs, bound to his dominions by laws which could only be evaded by flight—permission was hardly ever obtained for a withdrawal, which was considered as a sort of treason.

Colonel d'Auban's abandonment of the Russian service excited the surprise of his friends. Some painful thoughts seemed to be connected with the resolution which had cut short his career. He disliked to be questioned on the subject, and evasive answers generally put a stop to such inquiries. He had, however, reached an age when it is difficult to enter on a new career; when old associations on the one hand, and youthful competitors on the other, stand in the way of a fresh start in life. After six or seven years' absence from his country, he scarcely felt at home in France. His acquaintances thought him changed. The eager ambitious youth had become a quiet thoughtful man. But if the enthusiasm of his character was subdued, its energy was in no wise impaired. Youthful enthusiasm, in some natures, simply evaporates and leaves nothing behind it but frivolity; in others, it condenses and becomes earnestness.

At this turning moment one of the insignificant circumstances which often influence a person's whole destiny directed Colonel d'Auban's thoughts to the New World. In Europe, and especially in France, a perfect fever of excitement was raging on the subject of colonization. The rich territories on the banks of the Mississippi seemed a promised land to speculators of all classes and nations. The eagerness with which Law's system was hailed in Paris, and the avidity which sought to secure a share in the fabulous prospects of wealth held out to settlers in the new France, had never known a parallel. This fever was at its height when one day the ex-favourite of the Czar happened to meet in the Luxembourg gardens an old school-fellow, who, the instant he recognized his comrade at Vannes, threw himself into his arms, and poured forth a torrent of joyful exclamations. This was the Vicomte de Harlay, a wealthy, good-natured, eccentric Parisian, who had employed his time, his wit, and his means, since he had come of age, in committing follies, wasting money, and doing kindnesses. He had already managed to get rid of one large fortune; but fortune seemed to have a fancy for this spendthrift son of hers, and had recently bestowed upon him, through the death of a relative, a large estate, which he seemed bent upon running through with equal speed.

"My dear d'Auban! I am delighted to see you! Are you come on a mission from the polar bears? or has the Czar named you his Ambassador in Paris?"

"I have left the Russian service."

"You don't say so! Why people declared you were going to cut out Lefort and Gordon. Have you made your fortune, dear friend?"

D'Auban smiled and shook his head.
"A rolling stone gathers no moss."

"Do you wish to make your fortune?"

"I should have no objection."

"What are you doing, or wishing to do?"

"I am looking out for some employment. A small diplomatic post was offered to me some time ago, but it would not have suited me at all. I wish I could get a consulship. I want hard work, and plenty of it. What an extraordinary being you must think me."

"Have you any thing else in view at present?" inquired De Harlay, too eagerly bent on an idea of his own to notice his friend's last observation.

"No. When a person has thrown himself out of the beaten track, and then not pursued the path he had struck out, it is no easy matter to retrace his steps. Every road seems shut to him."

"But don't return to the beaten track—to the old road. Come with me to the new France. My cousin M. d'Artagnan is commandant of the troops at New Orleans, and has unbounded influence with the governor, M. Perrier, and with the Company. I will introduce you to him. I know he wants men like you to come out and redeem the character of the colony, which is overrun with scamps of every description."

"Amongst whom one might easily run the risk of being reckoned," said d'Auban, laughing.

"Nonsense," cried his friend. "I am turning emigrant myself, and have just obtained a magnificent concession in the neighbourhood of Fort St. Louis, and the village of St. François."

"You! And what on earth can have put such a fancy in your head?"

"My dear friend, I am weary of civilization—tired to death of Paris—worn out with the importunities of my relations, who want me to marry. I

cannot picture to myself any thing more delightful than to turn one's back, for a few years, on the world, and oneself into a hermit, especially with so agreeable a companion as M. le Colonel d'Auban. But really, I am quite in earnest. What could you do better than emigrate? A man of your philosophical turn of mind would be interested in studying the aspect of the New World. If the worst came to the worst, you might return at the end of a year and write a book of travels. I assure you it is not a bad offer I make you. I have considerable interest in the Rue Quincampoix. I was invited to little Mdle. Law's ball the other day, and had the honour of dancing a minuet with her. I shall write a *placet* to the young lady, begging of her to obtain from Monsieur son Père a concession for a friend of mine. It would be hard if I could not help a friend to a fortune when Laplace, my valet—you remember him, don't you?—has made such good use of our visits to the Paris Eldorado that the rogue has set up his carriage. He was good enough when he met me trudging along in the mud on a rainy day to offer me a lift. It is evident the world is turned upside down, on this side of the globe at least, and we may as well go and take a look at the *revers de la médaille*. Well, what do you say to my proposal?"

"That it is an exceedingly kind one, De Harlay. But I have no wish to speculate, or, I will own the truth, to be considered as an adventurer. That you, with your wealth, and in your position, should emigrate, can be considered at the worst but as an act of folly. It would be different with me."

"Well, I do not see why the new France is to be made over to the refuse of the old one. I see in your scruples, my dear friend, vestiges of that impracticability for which you were noted at College. But just think over the

question. Nobody asks you to speculate. For a sum not worth speaking of you can obtain a grant of land in a desert, and it will depend on your own ability or activity whether it brings you wealth or not. There is nothing in this, I should think, that can offend the most scrupulous delicacy."

"Can you allow me time to reflect?"

"Certainly. I do not sail for six weeks. It is amusing in the mean time to hear the ladies lamenting over my departure, and shuddering at the dangers I am to run in those wild regions, where, poor dears, they are dying to go themselves, and I fancy some of them believe that golden apples hang on the trees, and might be had for the trouble of gathering them, if only *le bon Monsieur Law* would let them into the secret. Have you seen the line of carriages up to his house? It is the very Court of Mammon. Duchesses and marchionesses jostle each other and quarrel on the staircase for shares, that is when they are happy enough to get in, which is not always the case. Madame de la Fère ordered her coachman to drive her chariot into the gutter and overturn it opposite to his door.* Then she screamed with all her might, hoping the divinity would appear. But the wily Scotchman was up to the trick, and ate his breakfast without stirring. We who were in his room almost died of laughing. Well, good-bye, my dear Colonel. When you have made up your mind let me know, that I may bespeak for you in time a berth in the Jean Bart and a concession in the New World."

The Vicomte de Harlay walked away, and d'Auban paced for a long time the alleys of the Luxembourg, revolving in his mind the ideas suggested by this conversation. "After so many doubts, so many projects which have ended in nothing, how

* A fact.

ingular it would be," he said to himself, "if a casual meeting with this scatter-brained friend of mine should end in determining the future course of my life." He had never thought of emigrating to the New World, but when he came to consider it there was much in the proposal which harmonized with his inclinations. The scope it afforded for enterprise and individual exertion was congenial to his temper of mind. Above all, it was something definite to look to, and only those who have experienced it know what a relief to some natures is the substitution of a definite prospect for a wearying uncertainty. In the evening of that day he called at one of the few houses at which he visited—that of M. d'Orgeville. He was distantly related to this gentleman, who held a high position amongst what was called the parliamentary nobility. His wife received every night a chosen number of friends, men of learning and of letters, members of the *haute magistrature*, dignitaries of the Church, and women gifted with the talents for conversation, which the ladies of that epoch so often possessed, frequented the salon of the Hotel d'Orgeville, and formed a society little inferior in agreeableness to the most celebrated circles of that day.

Does it not often happen, unaccountably often, that when the mind is full of a particular subject, what we read or what we hear tallies so strangely with what has occupied us, that it seems as if a mysterious answer were given to our secret thoughts? When d'Auban took his place that evening in the circle which surrounded the mistress of the house, he almost started with surprise at hearing M. de Mesme, a distinguished lawyer and scholar, say:

"I maintain that only two sorts of persons go to America, at least to Louisiana—adventurers and mission-

aries: you would not find in the whole colony a man who is not either an official, a priest, a soldier, or a scamp."

"A sweeping assertion indeed," observed Madame d'Orgeville. "Can no one here bring forward an instance to the contrary?"

"The Vicomte de Harlay has turned concessionist, and is about to sail for New Orleans. In which of the four classes he has mentioned would M. de Mesme include him?" This was said by a young man who was sitting next to d'Auban.

"Exceptions prove the rule. M. de Harlay's eccentricities are so well known that they baffle all calculation."

"For my part," said M. d'Orgeville, "I cannot understand why men of character and ability do not take more interest in these new colonies, and that the objects of a settler in that distant part of the world should not be considered worthy the attention of persons who have at heart not only the making of money, but also the advancement of civilization."

"Civilization!" ejaculated M. de Mesme, with a sarcastic smile. "What a glorious idea the natives must conceive of our civilization from the specimens we send them from France!"

"Surely," exclaimed young Blamenil, d'Auban's neighbour, "M. Perrier, M. d'Artagnan, the Perè Saeul and his companions, are not contemptible specimens of French merit?"

"Officials, soldiers, priests, every one of them," retorted M. de Mesme.

"What I have not yet heard of is a concessionist a planter, an *habitant* who is not a mere speculator or a needy adventurer. I appeal to you, M. Maret. Does not your brother write that the conversion of the Indians would be comparatively easy did not the colonists, by their selfish grasping conduct and the scandal of their immoral lives,

throw the greatest obstacles in the way of the missionaries? Did he not add that a few honest intelligent laymen would prove most useful auxiliaries in evangelizing the natives?"

"Your memory is faithful, M. de Mesme. I cannot deny that you quote correctly my brother's words. But his letters do not quite bear out your sweeping condemnation of the French settlers. If I remember rightly, he speaks in the highest terms of M. Koli and M. de Buisson."

"Is it the Père Maret that Monsieur is speaking of?" asked d'Auban of Madame d'Orgeville.

"Yes, he is his brother, and the missionary priest at St. François des Illinois. M. Maret is Monsieur le Prince de Condé's private Secretary. Let me introduce you to him. Perhaps you may have seen his brother at St. Petersburg before the expulsion of the Jesuits?"

"I knew him very well, and wished much to know where he had been sent."

"It may then, perhaps, interest you, sir, to read the last letter I have received from my brother; it contains no family secrets," M. Maret said with a smile.

This letter was dated from the Illinois. It did not give a very attractive picture of the country where d'Auban had already travelled in imagination since the morning. It made it evident that Europe sent out the scum of her population to people the New World; and that if good was to be done in those remote regions, it must be by an unusual amount of patience, courage, and perseverance.

But what would have disheartened some men proved to d'Auban a stimulus. There were, he perceived, two sides to the question of emigration; the material one of profit—the higher one well worthy of the attention of a

Christian. It seemed to him a singular coincidence that, on the same day on which it had been proposed to him to emigrate to America, a letter should be put into his hands, written from that country by a man for whom he had a profound respect and attachment. He found in it the following passage:

"The excellence of the climate, the beauty of the scenery, the easy navigation of the river, on the shore of which our mission is situated, and which flows a little below it into the Mississippi, the extreme fertility of the soil, the ease with which European productions grow and European animals thrive here, make this village quite a favoured spot, and one peculiarly adapted for the purposes of French colonization. But whether such establishments would be an advantage to our mission, is extremely doubtful. If these emigrants were like some few I have known, men of religious principles and moral lives, nothing could be better for our Indians, or a greater consolation to us, than that they should settle in our neighbourhood; but if they are to resemble those who, unfortunately, have of late years been pouring into Louisiana—adventurers, libertines, and scoffers—our peaceful and edifying Indian community would be speedily ruined. The Indians are very like children. Their powers of reasoning are not strong. What they see has an unbounded influence over them. They would quickly discover that men calling themselves Christians, and whom they would look upon as wiser than themselves, set at nought the principles of the Gospel, and, in spite of all the missionaries might say or do, the effect would be fatal. From such an evil as that I pray that we may be preserved."*

When the visitors had taken their

* From the *Lettres édifiantes*.

leave that night, and d'Auban remained alone with his friends, he opened his mind to them and asked their advice. M. d'Orgeville hesitated. His wife, a shrewd little woman, who understood character more readily than her excellent husband, fixed her dark penetrating eyes on Colonel d'Auban, and said: "My dear friend, my opinion is that you will do well to go to the New World. I say it with regret, for we shall miss you very much. If, indeed, you had accepted the heiress I proposed to you, and advanced your interests by means of her connections, it might have been different; but a man who at thirty years of age refuses to marry an heiress foolish enough to be in love with him, because, forsooth, he is not in love with her—who does not accept a place offered to him because it would happen to break another man's heart not to get it, and who will not make himself agreeable to the Regent's friends because he thinks them, and because they are, a set of despicable scoundrels—my dear Colonel, such a man has no business here. He had better pack up his trunks and go off to the New World, or to any world but this. Tenderness of heart, unswerving principles, the temper of Lafontaine's oak, which breaks and does not bend, do not answer in a country where every one is scrambling up the slippery ascent to fortune, holding on by another's coat."

"And yet," answered d'Auban, "there are men in France whose noble truthfulness and unshaken integrity none venture to call in question;" and as he spoke he glanced at M. d'Orgeville.

"True," quickly answered his wife, laying her hand on her husband's embroidered coat-sleeve; "but remember this, such men have not their fortunes to make. They are at the top of the ladder, not at the bottom, and that makes all the difference. It is always better to look matters in the face. Here

you have—some people say wantonly—I am persuaded for some good reason—but anyhow you have turned your back upon fortune in a most affronting manner, and the fickle goddess is not likely, I am afraid, to give you in a hurry another opportunity of insulting her. I really think you would be wrong to refuse M. de Harlay's proposal. You see, my dear friend, you are not a practical man."

"Well, I will not urge you to define that word," said d'Auban, with a smile; "but if your accusation is just, how can you believe that I shall triumph over the difficulties of a settler's life?"

"Oh, that is quite a different affair. What I call a practical man in Europe is one who bends before the blast, and slips through the meshes of a net. In the desert, and among savages, the temper of the oak may find its use, and stern self-reliance its element."

"I am afraid she is right," said M. d'Orgeville, with a sigh; "though I would fain not think so."

"At any rate, you will not be in a hurry to come to a conclusion on this important question, and if you do emigrate, all I can say is, that you will be a glorious instance of the sort of settler M. de Mesme does not believe in."

A few weeks after this conversation had taken place, M. de Harlay and Henri d'Auban were watching the receding coasts of France from the deck of the *Jean Bart*, and four or five years later the latter was crossing the forest, on his way back to the Mission of St. Francis, after a visit to an Indian village, the chiefs of which had smoked the pipe of peace with their French neighbours. He had learnt the language, and successfully cultivated the acquaintance of many of the native tribes, and was at the head of a flourishing plantation. Madame d'Orgeville had proved right. The peculiarities of character which had stood in

the way of a poor *gentilhomme* seeking to better his fortunes in France, favoured the successful issue of his transatlantic undertakings. M. de Harlay had fulfilled his promise by obtaining from the Company a grant of land for his friend adjacent to his own concession, and he had worked it to good purpose. His small fortune was employed in the purchase of stock, of instruments of labour, and, it must be owned, of negroes at New Orleans. But it was a happy day for the poor creatures in the slave-market of that city, when they became the property of a man whose principles and disposition differed so widely from those of the generality of colonists. He engaged also as labourers Christian Indians of the Mission, and a few ruined emigrants, too happy to find employment in a country where, from want of capital or ability, their own speculations had failed. It was no easy task to govern a number of men of various races and characters, to watch over their health, to stimulate their activity, to maintain peace amongst them, and, above all, to improve their morals. The Indians needed to be confirmed in their recently acquired faith, the negroes to be instructed, and the Europeans, with some few exceptions, recalled to the practice of it. He laboured indefatigably, and on the whole successfully, for these ends. His courage in enduring privations, his generosity, perhaps even more his strict justice, his kindness to the sick and suffering, endeared him to his dependants. He seemed formed for command. His outward person was in keeping with his moral qualities. He hunted, fished, and rode better than any other man in the Mission or the tribe. In physical strength and stature he surpassed them all. This secured the respect of those unable to appreciate mental superiority.

It was not extraordinary, under these circumstances, that his concession

thrived, that fortune once more smiled upon him. He was glad of it, not only from a natural pleasure in success, but also from the consciousness that, as his wealth increased, so would his means of usefulness. He became deeply attached to the land which was bountifully bestowing its treasures upon him, and displaying every day before his eyes the grand spectacle of its incomparable natural beauties. His heart warmed towards the children of the soil, and he took a lively interest in the evangelization of the Indian race, and the labours of the missionaries, especially those of his old friend Father Maret, whose church and the village which surrounded it stood on the opposite bank of the stream, on the side of which his own house was built. If his life had not been one of incessant labour, he must have suffered from its loneliness. But he had scarcely had time during those busy years to feel the want of companionship. Month after month had elapsed in the midst of engrossing occupations. On the whole, he was happy—happier than most men are—much happier, certainly, than his poor friend, M. de Harlay, who wasted a large sum of money in building an *habitation*, as the houses of the French settlers were called, totally out of keeping with the habits and requirements of the mode of life he had adopted. For one whole year he tried to persuade himself that he enjoyed that kind of existence; it was only at the close of the second year of his residence in America, that he acknowledged to his companion that he was bored to death with the whole thing, and willing to spend as large a sum to get rid of his concession as he had already expended upon it. At last, he declared one morning that he could endure it no longer.

Maitre Simon's barge was about to descend the Mississippi to New Or-

icans. The temptation was irresistible, and he made up his mind to return to France, leaving behind him his land, his plantations, his horses, and the charming *habitation*, called the *Pavillon*, or sometimes, "*La Folie de Harlay*." D'Auban, he said, might cultivate it himself, and pay him a nominal rent, or sell it for whatever it would fetch to some other planter. But in America he would not remain a day longer if he could help it; and if Monsieur Law had cheated all the world, as the last letters from Paris had stated, the worst punishment he wished him was banishment to his German settlement in the New World. And so he stood, waving his handkerchief and kissing his hand to his friend, as the clumsy barge glided away down the giant river; and d'Auban sighed when he lost sight of it, for he knew he should miss his light-hearted countryman, whose very follies had served to cheer and enliven the first years of his emigration. And, indeed, from that time up to the moment when this story begins, with the sole exception of Father Maret, he had not associated with any one whose habits of thought and tone of conversation were at all congenial to his own. No two persons could differ more in character and mind than De Harlay and himself; but when people have been educated together, have mutual friends, acquaintances, and recollections, there is a common ground of thought and sympathy, which in some measure supplies the place of a more intimate congeniality of feelings and opinions.

He sometimes asked himself if this isolation was always to be his portion. He had no wish to return to Europe. He was on the whole well satisfied with his lot, nay, grateful for its many advantages; but in the course of a long solitary walk through the forest, such as he had taken that day, or in the

evenings in his log-built home, when the wind moaned through the pine woods with a sound which reminded him of the murmur of the sea on his native coast, feelings would be awakened in his heart more like yearnings, indeed, than regrets. In many persons' lives there is a past which claims nothing from them but a transient sigh, breathed not seldom with a sense of escape—phases in their pilgrimage never to be travelled over any more—earthly spots which they do not hope, nay, do not desire to revisit—but the remembrance of which affects them just because it belongs to the dim shadowy past, that past which was once alive and now is dead. This had been the case with d'Auban as he passed that evening through the little cemetery of the Christian Mission, where many a wanderer from the Old World rested in a foreign soil by the side of the children of another race, aliens in blood but brethren in the faith. A little farther on he met Thérèse, the catechist and schoolmistress of the village. He stopped her in order to inquire after a boy, the son of one of his labourers, whom he knew she had been to visit. Thérèse was an Indian girl, the daughter of an Algonquin chief, who, after a battle with another tribe, in which he had been mortally wounded, had sent one of his soldiers with his child to the black robe of St. François des Illinois, with the prayer that he would bring her up as a Christian. He had been himself baptized a short time before. The little maiden had ever since been called the Flower of the Mission. Its church had been her home; its festivals her pleasures; its sacred enclosure her playground. Before she could speak plainly she gathered flowers and carried them in her little brown arms into the sanctuary. When older, she was wont to assemble the children of her own age, and to lead them into the prairies

to make garlands of the purple amorphia, or by the side of the streams to steal golden-crowned lotuses from their broad beds of leaves for our Lady's altar; and under the catalpa trees and the ilexes she told them stories of Jesus and of Mary, till the shades of evening fell, and "the compass flower, true as a magnet, pointed to the north." As she advanced in age her labours extended; but such as her childhood had been, such was her womanhood. She became the catechist of the Indian converts, and the teacher of their children. The earnest piety and the poetic genius of her race gave a peculiar originality and beauty to her figurative language; and d'Auban had sometimes concealed himself behind the wall of the school hut and listened to the Algonquin maiden's simple instructions.

"How is Pompey's son to-day?" he asked, as they met near the church.

"About to depart for the house of the great spirits," she answered. "He wants nothing now, angels will soon bear him away to the land of the hereafter. We should not grieve for him."

"But *you* look as if you *had* been grieving. Thérèse, do not hurry away. Cannot you spare me a few minutes, even though I am a white man? I am afraid you do not like French people."

"Ah! if all white men were like you it would be well for them and for us. It is for one of the daughters of your tribe that I have been grieving, not for the child of the black man."

"Indeed, and what is her name?"

"I do not know her name. She is whiter than any of the white women I have seen—as white as that magnolia flower, and the scent of her clothes is like that of hay when newly mown."

"Where did you meet with her?"

"I have seen her walking in the forest, or by the side of the river, late in the evening; and sometimes she sits

down on one of the tombs near the church. She lives with her father in a hut some way off, amongst the white people, who speak a harsher language than yours."

"The German colony, I suppose? Is this woman young?"

"She must have seen from twenty to twenty-five summers."

"When did they arrive?"

"On the day of the great tempest, which blew down so many trees and unroofed our cabins. A little boat attached to Simon's barge brought them to the shore. They took shelter in a ruined hut by the side of the river, and have remained there ever since."

"Have they any servants?"

"A negro boy and an Indian woman, whom they hired since they came. She buys food for them in the village. The old man I have never seen."

"And why do you grieve for this white woman, Thérèse?"

"Because I saw her face some nights ago when she was sitting on the stump of a tree, and the moon was shining full upon it. It was beautiful, but so sad; it made me think of a dove I once found lying on the grass with a wound in her breast. When I went near the poor bird it fluttered painfully and flew away. And the daughter of the white man is like that dove; she would not stay to be comforted."

"Does she ever come to the house of prayer?"

"No. She wanders about the enclosure and sits on the tombstones, and sometimes she seems to listen to the singing, but if she sees any one coming she hurries off like a frightened fawn."

"And her father, what does he do?"

"He never comes here at all, I believe."

"And you think this young woman is unhappy?"

"Yes. I have seen her weep as if her eyes were two fountains, and her

soul the spring from whence they flowed. It is not with us as with the white people. We do not shed tears when we suffer. The pain is within, deep in the heart. It gives no outward sign. We are not used to see men and women weep. One day I was talking to Catherine, a slave, on the Lormois Concession, who would fain be a Christian, but that she hates the white people. Many years ago she was stolen from her own country and her little children, and sold to a Frenchman. There are times when she is almost mad, and raves like a wild beast robbed of its young. But Catherine loves me because I am not white, and that I tell her of the Great Spirit who was made man, and said that little children were to come to Him. I was trying to persuade her to forgive the white people and not to curse them any more, and then, I said, she would see her children in a more beautiful country than her own, in the land of the hereafter; that the Great Spirit, if she asked Him, would send His servants to teach them the way to that land where mothers and children meet again if they are good. Then in my ear I heard the sound of a deep sigh, and turning round I saw the white man's daughter, half-concealed by the green boughs, and on her pale cheeks were tears that looked like dew-drops on a prairie lily. Her eyes met mine, and, as usual, she was off into the forest before I could

utter a word. I have not seen her since."

"I wish you did know her," said d'Auban, thoughtfully.

Thérèse shook her head.

"It is not for the Indian to speak comfort to the daughter of the white man. She does not know the words which would reach her heart. The black robe, the chief of prayer, whom the Great Spirit sends to His black, His Indian, and His white children; his voice is strong like the west wind; from his lips consolations flow, and blessings from his hand. And you, the eagle of her tribe, will you not stoop to shelter the white dove who has flown across the Great Salt Lake to the land of the red men?"

D'Auban felt touched by the earnestness of Thérèse's manner, and interested by her description of the stranger. He could easily imagine how desolate a European woman would feel on arriving in such a miserable place as the German settlement, and he promised that as soon as he could find leisure he would ride to that spot and see if he could be of use to the white man's daughter. Upon this they parted, but the whole of the evening, and the next day in the maize fields and the cotton groves, his imagination was continually drawing pictures of the sorrowful woman—the wounded bird—that would not stay to be comforted.

CHAPTER II.

He is a proper man's picture, but . . . how oddly he is suited. I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere.—*Shakespeare.*

The power that dwelleth in a word to waken
 Vague yearnings, like the sailor's for the shore,
 And dim remembrances whose hues seem taken
 From some bright former state, our own no more.
 The sudden images of vanished things
 That o'er the spirit flash, we know not why,
 And the strange inborn sense of coming ill
 That oftentimes whispers to the haunted breast,
 Whence doth that murmur wake, that shadow fall?
 Whence are those thoughts? "Tis mystery all,"
Mrs. Hemans.

A FEW days after his conversation with Thérèse, d'Auban rode to a place where some Saxon colonists were clearing a part of the forest. He wished to purchase some of the wood they had been felling, and, dismounting, he tied his horse to a tree and walked to the spot where the overseer was directing the work. Whilst he was talking to him, he noticed an old man who was standing a little way off, leaning with both hands on a heavy gold-headed cane. He wore the ordinary European dress of the time, but there was an elaborate neatness, a studied refinement in his appearance singular enough amidst the rude settlers of the New World. His ruffles were made of the finest lace, and the buckles on his shoes silver gilt. There was nothing the least remarkable in the face or attitude of this stranger, nothing that would have attracted attention at Paris or perhaps at New Orleans; but it was out of keeping with the rough activity of the men and the wild character of the scenery in that remote region. His pale gray eyes, shaded with white eyebrows, wandered listlessly over the busy scene, and he gave a nervous start whenever a tree fell with a louder crash than usual. One of the

labourers had left an axe on the grass near where he was standing. He raised it as if to measure its weight, but his feeble grasp could not retain its hold of the heavy implement, and it fell to the ground. D'Auban stepped forward to pick it up and restore it to him. He thanked him, and said in French, but with a German accent, that he would not meddle with it any more. This little incident served as an introduction, and the old man seemed pleased to find somebody not too busy to talk to him. His own observations betrayed great ignorance as to the nature of the country or the general habits of colonists. He talked about the want of accommodation he had met with in America, and the dirty state of the Indian villages, as if he had been travelling through a civilized country. He told d'Auban that he intended to purchase land in that neighbourhood, and to build a house.

"I begin to despair," he said, "of finding one which would suit us to buy or to hire. I suppose, sir, you do not know of one?"

"Certainly not of one to let," d'Auban answered with a smile, for the idea of hiring a house in the backwoods struck him in a ludicrous light.

"But I have had a concession left on my hands by a friend who has returned to Europe, and which has upon it a house very superior to any thing we see in this part of the world. Many thousand francs have been spent on this little pavillon, which is reckoned quite a curiosity, and goes by the name of the Vicomte de Harlay's Folly. The purchaser of the concession would get the house simply thrown into the bargain."

"That sounds very well," exclaimed the old man; "I think it would suit us."

"Well, M. de Harlay has empowered me to dispose of his land and house. It is close to my plantation, a few leagues up the river. I should be very happy to let you see it, and to explain its advantages as an investment. I am going back there this morning, and if you would like to visit it at once, I am quite at your orders. We have still the day before us."

The stranger bowed, coughed, and then said in a hesitating manner:

"Am I by any chance speaking to Colonel d'Auban?"

"Yes, I am Colonel d'Auban, *pour vous servir*, as the peasants say in France."

"Then indeed, sir, I am inexpressibly honoured and delighted to have made your acquaintance. I have been assured that in this country an honest man is a rarity which Diogenes might well have needed his lantern to discover. A merchant at New Orleans, to whom I brought letters of introduction, told me that if I was going to the Illinois I should try to consult Colonel d'Auban about the purchase of a plantation, and not hesitate a moment about following his advice. I therefore gratefully accept your obliging proposal, but I must beg you to be so good as to allow me first to inform my daughter of our intended excursion. I will be

with you again in a quarter of an hour, my amiable friend, ready and happy to surrender myself to your invaluable guidance."

"Who is that gentleman?" asked d'Auban of the German overseer, as soon as the little old man had trotted away.

"He is called M. de Chambelle. Though his name is French, I think he is a German. Nobody knows whence he comes, or why he is come at all. He talks of houses and gardens, as if he was living in France or in Saxony. I wish him joy of the villas he will find here. And then he speaks to the Indians and the negroes for all the world as if they were Christians."

"Many of them are Christians, M. Klein, and often better ones than ourselves," observed d'Auban.

"Oh! I did not mean Christians in that sense. It is only a way of speaking, you know."

"True," said d'Auban. "A man told me the other day, that his horse was so clever that he never forgave or forgot—just like a Christian."

The overseer laughed.

"You should see that old gentleman bowing and speechifying to the Indian women. He said the other day to a hideous old squaw, "*Madame la Sauvagesse*, will you sell me some of the fruit your fair hands have gathered?" She said she would give him some *without intention*, which in their phraseology means without expecting to be paid. The next day, however, she came to his hut, and inquired if he was not going to give *her* something *without intention*. The poor old man, who is dreadfully afraid of the natives, was obliged to part with some clothes Madame la Sauvagesse had taken a fancy to."

"Has M. de Chambelle a daughter?"

"Yes, a pale handsome woman, much too delicate and helpless, from what I hear, for this sort of hand-to-mouth.

life. They say she is a widow. It is somewhat funny that the French people who come here almost always stick *à de* before their names. The father is called M. *de* Chambelle, and the daughter, Madame *de* Moldau."

"Do you know if they have brought letters of introduction with them to any one in this or the neighbouring settlements?"

"I have not heard that they have; except M. Koli and yourself, there is scarcely a planter hereabouts whom it would be of any advantage to know."

"I thought as they were Germans that some of your countrymen might have written about them."

"We are a poor set here now that M. Law's grand schemes have come to naught. We do a little business on our own account by felling and selling trees, and it is lucky we do so, for not a sou of his money have we seen for a long time. It is impossible to maintain his slaves, and the plantation is going to ruin. Ah! there is M. de Chambelle coming back; did you ever see such a figure for an *habitant*? One would fancy he carried a hair-dresser about, his hair is always so neatly powdered."

"Will a long walk tire you?" asked d'Auban as his new acquaintance joined them, "or will you ride my horse? Do not have any scruples. No amount of walking ever tires me."

"Dear sir, if we might both walk I should like it better," answered M. de Chambelle, glancing uneasily at the horse, who, weary of the long delay, was pawing in a manner he did not quite fancy. "If you will now and then lend me your arm, I can keep on my legs without fatigue for three or four hours."

D'Auban passed the horse's bridle over his arm, and led the way to an opening in the forest, through which they had to pass on their way to the

Pavillon St. Agathe, which was the proper name of M. de Harlay's *habitation*. Whenever they came to a rough bit of ground he gave his arm to his companion, who leant upon it lightly, and chatted as he went along with a sort of child-like confidence in his new friend. D'Auban's concession, and the neighbouring one of St. Agathe, were situated much higher up the river than the German settlement. His own house was close to the water-side. The pavilion stood on an eminence in the midst of a beautiful grove, and overlooked a wide extent of prairie land, bounded only in one direction by the outline of the Rocky Mountains. The magnificent scenery which surrounded this little oasis, the luxuriant vegetation, the grandeur of the wide-spreading trees, the domes of blossom which here and there showed amidst masses of verdure, the numberless islets scattered over the surface of the broad-bosomed river, the shady recesses and verdant glades which formed natural alleys and bowers in its encircling forest, combined to make its position so beautiful, that it almost accounted for M. de Harlay's short-lived but violent fancy for his transatlantic property. It was a lovely scene which met the eyes of the pedestrians, when about mid-day they reached the brow of the hill. A noontide stillness reigned in the savannahs, where herds of buffaloes reposed in the long grass. Now and then a slight tremulous motion, like a ripple on the sea, stirred that boundless expanse of green, but not a sound of human or animal life rose from its flowery depths.

Not so in the grove round the pavilion. There the ear was almost deafened by the multifarious cries of beasts, the chirpings of birds, the hum of myriads of insects. The eye was dazzled by the rapidity of their movements. Hares and rabbits and squirrels dart-

ed every instant out of the thickets, and monkeys grinned and chattered amongst the branches. Winged creatures of every shape and hue were springing out of the willow grass, hovering over clusters of roses, swinging on the cordages of the grape vine, flying up into the sky, diving in the streamlets, fluttering amongst the leaves, and producing a confused murmur very strange to an unaccustomed ear.

Neither the magnificence of the scenery nor the vivacity of the denizens of the surrounding grove, attracted much of M. de Chambelle's attention. When he caught sight of the pavillon, he burst forth in exclamations of delight. "Is it possible!" he exclaimed. "Do I really see, not a cabin or a hut, not one of those abominable wigwams, but a house, a real house! fit for civilized people to live in! and is it really to be sold, my dear sir, there, just as it stands, furniture, birds, flowers, and all? What may be the price of this charming *habitation*?"

D'Auban named the sum he thought it fair to ask for the plantation, and said the house was included in the purchase. M. de Chambelle took out his pocket-book and made a brief calculation.

"It will do perfectly well," he exclaimed. "The interest of this sum will not exceed the rent we should have had to pay for a house at New Orleans. It is exactly what we wanted."

"You have been fortunate to hit upon it, then," said d'Auban with a smile, "for I suppose that from the mouth of the Mississippi to the sources of the Missouri you would not have found such a habitation as my poor friend's Folly. However, as Providence has conducted you to this spot, and you think the *établissement* will suit you, we better go over the house and afterwards visit the plantations, in

order that you may judge of the present condition and the prospects of the concession."

"I do not much care about that, my dear sir. My knowledge on agricultural subjects is very limited, and I am no judge of crops. Indeed I greatly doubt if I should know a field of maize from one of barley, or distinguish between a coffee and a cotton plantation."

D'Auban looked in astonishment at his companion. "Is this a cunning adventurer, or the most simple of men?" was the thought in his mind as he led M. de Chambelle into the house, who was at once as much delighted with the inside as he had been with the outside of the building. The entrance-chamber was decorated with the skins of various wild animals, and the horns of antelopes ingeniously arranged in the form of trophies. Bows and arrows, hatchets, tomahawks, and clubs, all instruments of Indian warfare, were hanging against the walls. There was a small room on one side of this hall fitted up with exquisite specimens of Canadian workmanship, and possessing several articles of European furniture, which had been conveyed at an immense expense from New Orleans. There was an appearance of civilization, if not of what we should call comfort, in this parlor, as well as in two sleeping chambers, in which real beds were to be found; a verandah, which formed a charming sitting-room in hot weather, and at the back of the house a well-fitted up kitchen, put the finishing touch to M. de Chambelle's ecstasies.

"One could really fancy oneself in Europe," he exclaimed, rubbing his hands with delight.

"I do not think Madame de Moldau will believe her eyes when she sees this charming pavillon. It is really more than we could have expected. . . ."

"I should think so, indeed," said d'Auban, laughing. "You might have

travelled far and wide before you stumbled on such a house in the New World."

"Ah, the New World—the New World, my dear sir. Don't you find it dreadfully uncivilized? I cannot accustom myself to the manners of the savages. Their countenances are so wild, their habits so unpleasant, there is something so—so, in short, so savage in all their ways, that I cannot feel at all at home with them. By-the-bye, there is only one thing I do not like in this delightful *habitation*."

"What is it?"

"I am afraid it is a very solitary residence. You see the Indian servant, our negro boy, Madame de Moldau, and myself, we do not compose a very formidable garrison."

"But my house is at a stone's throw from this one. In the winter you can see it through those trees, and then the wigwams of our laborers are scattered about at no great distance."

"Ah, your laborers live in wigwams! Horrible things, I think; but I suppose they are used to them. Have you many savages, then, in your employment?"

"I have some Indian laborers, but they are Christians, and no longer deserve the name of savages. I like them better than the negroes. My French servants and I live in the house I spoke of."

"Oh, then it is all right, all charming, all perfect. With a loud cry of 'A moi, mes amis, Messieurs les Sauvages are upon us!' we could call you to our assistance. Well, my dear sir, I wish to conclude the purchase of this place as soon as possible. Will it suit your convenience if I give you a cheque on Messrs. Dumont et Compagnie, New Orleans?"

"Certainly. I have no doubt they will undertake to transmit the amount to M. de Harlay's bankers in Paris."

"I hope we may be allowed to take possession of the house without much

delay; Madame de Moldau is so weary of the vile hut where we have spent so many weeks."

"I can take upon myself to place the pavillon at once at your disposal for a few days, and you can then make up your mind at leisure about concluding the purchase."

"Thank you, my dear sir; but my mind is, I assure you, quite made up. I am sure we could go farther and fare worse; the saying was never more applicable."

"But you are not at all acquainted yet with the state or the value of the concession. You have not gone over the accounts of the last years."

"Is that necessary?"

"Indispensable, I should say," d'Auban answered, rather coldly.

"It would be quite impossible, I suppose, to let us have the house without the land? You see it will suit us perfectly as a residence, but I do not see how I am to manage the business of the concession. Is not that what you call it?"

D'Auban, more puzzled than ever by the simplicity of this avowal, exclaimed, "But in the name of patience, sir, what can you want a house for in this country, unless you intend to work the land? You do not mean, I suppose, to throw it out of cultivation and to sell the slaves?"

"O no! I suppose that would not be right. There are slaves, too. I had not thought of that. Who has managed it all since M. de Harlay went away?"

"I have."

"Then you will help me with your advice?" This idea made M. de Cham-belle brighten up like a person who suddenly sees a ray of light in a dark wood. "Oh yes, of course, every thing must go on as usual, and you will put me in the way of it all."

"I now propose," said d'Auban,

‘that we take some refreshment at my house, where you can see the accounts, and then that we should go over the plantations.’

“By all means, by all means,” cried M. de Chambelle, trying to put a good face on the matter. “And as we walk along, you can point out the principal things that have to be attended to in the management of a concession.”

During the remainder of the day d'Auban took great pains to explain to his guest the nature and capabilities of his proposed purchase, and the amount of its value as an investment. M. de Chambelle listened with great attention, and assented to every thing. Two or three times he interrupted him with such remarks as these: “She will like the low couch in the parlour;” or “Madame de Moldau can sit in the verandah on fine summer evenings;” or again, “I hope the noise of the birds and insects will not annoy Madame de Moldau. Do you think, my dear sir, the slaves could drive them away?”

“I am afraid that would be a task beyond their power,” d'Auban said as gravely as he could. “But depend upon it, after the first few days your daughter will get so accustomed to the sound as scarcely to hear it. I am afraid,” he added, “she must have suffered very much during the voyage up the river?”

“Oh yes, she has suffered very much,” the old man answered; and then he hastened to change the subject by asking some question about crops, which certainly evinced an incredible absence of the most ordinary knowledge and experience in such matters.

Before they parted, M. de Chambelle and d'Auban agreed that in the afternoon of the following day he should remove with his daughter to St. Agathe. D'Auban offered to fetch them himself in his boat and to send a barge for their

luggage. M. de Chambelle thanked him very much, hesitated a little, and then said that, if he would not take it amiss, he should beg of him not to come himself, but only to send his boatmen. Madame de Moldau was so unaccustomed to the sight of strangers, and in such delicate health, that the very efforts she would make to express her gratitude to Colonel d'Auban would tax her strength too severely. He felt a little disappointed, but of course assented. The following morning he went through the rooms of the pavilion, arranging and re-arranging the furniture, and conveying from his own house some of the not over-abundant articles it contained to the chamber Madame de Moldau was to occupy.

“Antoine,” he said to his servant, who was in the kitchen at St. Agathe, storing it with provisions, “just go home and fetch me the two pictures in my study; the walls here look so bare.”

“But Monsieur's own room will look very dull without them,” answered Antoine, who by no means approved of the dismantling process which had been going on all the morning in his master's house.

“Never mind, I want them here; and bring some nails and some string with you.”

A little water-colour view of a castle on a cliff and a tolerable copy of the Madonna della Seggiola soon ornamented the lady's bed-room, whilst a selection from his scanty library gave a home-like appearance to the little parlour. A basket full of grapes was placed on the table, and then Thérèse came in with an immense nosegay in her hand.

“Ah! that is just what I wanted,” d'Auban exclaimed.

“For the nest of the white dove,” she answered, with the sudden lighting up of the eye which supplies the place of a smile in an Indian face.

"You see we have found a cage for your wounded bird, Thérèse, and now we shall have to tame her."

"Ah!" cried Thérèse, putting her hand to her mouth—a token of admiration amongst the Indians—"you have brought her pictures, which will not fade like my poor flowers."

"But she may get tired of the pictures, and you may bring her, if you like, fresh flowers every day."

"Look," said Thérèse, pointing to the river. "There is your boat; they are coming."

"So they are. I did not expect them so soon."

He sent Antoine to meet the strangers and conduct them to the house, and walked across the wooded lawn to his own home. All the evening he felt unsettled. In his monotonous life an event of any sort was an unusual excitement. He went in and out of the house, paced restlessly up and down the margin of the stream. His eyes were continually turning towards the pavillon, from the chimney of which, for the first time for three years, smoke was issuing. He watched that blue curling smoke, and felt as if it warmed his heart. Perhaps he had suffered from a sense of loneliness more than he was quite aware of, and that the thought of those helpless beings close at hand, of whom he knew so little, but who inspired him with a vague interest, was an unconscious relief. He pictured them to himself in their new home. He wondered what impression the first sight of it had made on Madame de Moldau, and then he tried to fancy what she was like. Thérèse thought her beautiful, and the German overseer said she was handsome. She was not, in that case, like her father. Would he feel disappointed when he saw her? Would she turn out to be a good-looking woman with white cheeks and yellow hair, such as

an Indian and a German boor would admire, one because it was the first of the sort she had seen, and the other because he had not known any others. He missed his pictures a little. The room, as Antoine had said, would look dull without them. Perhaps they had not attracted her notice at all, or if they had, she did not perhaps care at all about them. He grew tired of thinking, but could not banish the subject from his mind. As the shades of evening deepened, and the crescent moon arose, and myriads of stars, "the common people of the sky," as Sir Henry Wootton calls them, showed one by one in the blue vault of heaven, and were pictured in the mirror of the smooth broad river, he still wandered about the grove, whence he could see St. Agathe and the window of the chamber which he supposed was Madame de Moldau's. There was a light in it—perhaps she was reading one of his books—perhaps she was gazing on the dark woods and shining river, and thinking of a far-distant home. She was weeping, perhaps, or praying, or sleeping. "Again," he impatiently exclaimed, "again at this guessing work! What a fool I am! What are these people to me, and why on earth have they come here?"

That last question he was destined very often to put to himself, with more or less of curiosity, of anxiety, and it might be, of pain, as time went on.

The purchaser of St. Agathe was enchanted with his new possession, and began in earnest, as he considered, to apply himself to his new pursuits as an agriculturist and planter; but the absurd mistakes which attended his first attempts at the management of his property, increased d'Auban's astonishment that a man so unfitted for business should ever have thought of becoming a settler. Instruction and advice were simply thrown away on

M. de Chambelle. He might as well have talked to a child about the management of a plantation, and he plainly foresaw that unless some more experienced person were entrusted with the business, the concession might be as well at once given up. At the end of a few days he frankly told him as much, and advised him to engage some other emigrant to act as his agent, or to join him as a partner in the speculation.

M. de Chambelle eagerly caught at the idea, and proposed to d'Auban himself to enter into partnership with him.

"Indeed, my dear Colonel," he urged, "you will be doing a truly charitable action. Whom else could I trust? on whose honour could I rely in this dreadful country of savages and settlers, many of whom have not more conscience than the natives?"

"Not half as much, I fear," said d'Auban; "but you could write to M. Dumont and ask him to look out for you at New Orleans—"

"And in the mean time ruin the plantation and go out of my mind. M. d'Auban, do consider my position."

There was an eager wistful expression on the old man's face, which at once touched and provoked d'Auban, and "why on earth did he put himself in that position?" was his inward exclamation. He was not in a very good humour that day. He could not help feeling a little hurt at the manner in which, whilst he was assisting her father in every possible way, and showering kindnesses upon them, Madame de Moldau avoided him. M. de Chambelle had asked him one day to call at St. Agathe, and assured him that, much as she dreaded the sight of strangers, she really did wish to make his acquaintance. D'Auban said he would go with him to the pavillon, but begged him to wait a few minutes

till he had finished directing some letters which a traveller was going to take with him that evening. M. de Chambelle sat down, and as each letter was thrown on the table, he read the directions. One of them was to a Prince Mitroski, at St. Petersburg. As they were walking to St. Agathe, he asked d'Auban if he had ever been in Russia.

"Yes," was the answer. "I was there for some years."

"How long ago, my dear sir?"

"I left it about five years ago."

"Were you in the Russian service?"

"Yes, I commanded a regiment of artillery. And you, M. de Chambelle, have you ever been at St. Petersburg?"

"Oh, I have been all over the world,"

M. de Chambelle answered with a shrug, and then began to chatter in his random sort of way, passing from one subject to another without allowing time for any comments. When they arrived at the pavillon, he begged d'Auban to wait in the parlor, and went to look for Madame de Moldau. In a few minutes he returned, and said she had a bad headache, and begged M. d'Auban to excuse her. Several days had elapsed since then, and no message had been sent to invite his return. He felt a little angry with the lady, and still more with himself, for caring whether she saw him or not.

Foolish as all this was, it did not incline him to a favourable consideration of M. de Chambelle's proposal.

"You are so clever," the latter pleaded. "You know all about this concession, and you manage your own so beautifully, and you understand so well how to behave to the labourers. When I speak civilly to them they laugh, and if I find fault they turn their backs upon me, and make remarks in their own language, which I have every reason to suppose are not over and above polite. We are not in any particular

nursey about profits; I do not mind letting you into the secret. We have got a large sum of money at the banker's at New Orleans, and I can draw upon them if necessary. You would then make all the bargains for us with Messieurs les Sauvages, and I need not have anything to say to them. I cannot tell you how happy it would make me, and Madame de Moldau also."

"Indeed!" d'Auban said, with a rather scornful smile.

"Of course you would make your own conditions. I assure you that I look upon it as a providential event to have met with such a friend as you have been to us in this land of savages and alligators. By the way, I forgot to tell you how narrowly I escaped yesterday one of those horrible animals."

"Your reliance on Providence seems to me to have been carried to excess," d'Auban observed, still in a sarcastic tone. "Suppose we had not met, what would you have done? Your daughter could not have endured the ordinary hardships of a settler's life. Had it not been for St. Agathe—"

"Aye, and for Colonel d'Auban, what would have become of us? But you see she would come to Louisiana, and when we got to New Orleans nothing would serve her but to come on to this place. What could I do?"

D'Auban laughed. "Is it, then, the new fashion in France for parents to obey their children?"

"Ah! ce que femme veut Dieu le veut! One cannot refuse her anything."

"Perhaps she has had some great sorrow. Has she lost her husband lately?"

"I suppose she has suffered every thing a woman can suffer," the old man answered, in a tone of feeling which touched d'Auban.

"She has one great blessing left," he kindly said—"an affectionate father. O no, no! what can such a one as I

do for her? But what I meant was that if she is bent upon a thing—"

"She cannot be dissuaded from it," said d'Auban, again smiling.

"Well, I could never say nay to a lady, and when you see Madame de Moldau—"

"I shall understand that her wishes are not to be resisted. I am quite willing to believe it."

"But with regard to the partnership, M. d'Auban."

"Well, I am sure you will excuse my speaking plainly, M. de Chambelle. I perfectly admit that you cannot manage your property yourself, but at the same time I would greatly prefer your applying to some other colonist to join you in the undertaking."

"What is the use of talking to me of some other colonist? Is there a single person in this neighbourhood whom you could now really recommend to me as a partner? Only consider how I am situated."

"Et que diable est-il venu faire dans cette galère!" muttered d'Auban, and then said out loud: "But it is impossible to conclude an arrangement of this kind in an off-hand manner. There must be an agreement drawn up and signed before witnesses."

"By all means, my dear sir, as many as you please."

"But such formalities are not easily accomplished in a place like this."

"Then, for heaven's sake, let us dispense with them! The case lies in a nut-shell. I have purchased this land for the sake of the little bijou of a house upon it; and as regards the plantation, I am much in the same position as a Milord Anglais I once heard of, who bought Polichinelle, and was surprised to find, when he brought it home, that it did not act of its own accord. I have used my best endeavours to master the subject. I have tried to assume the manners of a planter; but *chassez le*

naturel, il revient au galop, and mine is cantering back as fast as possible to its starting-point. There are things a man can do, and others he can't. I was not made for a colonist."

D'Auban was very near saying, "What were you made for?" but he checked the sneering thought. In the prime of life and full enjoyment of a vigorous intellect, he had been tempted to despise the feeble fidgety old man before him, forgetting that the race is not always to the swift or the battle to the strong. We sometimes wonder what part some particular person is sent to fulfil on earth. He or she seems to our short-sighted view so insignificant, so incapable, so devoid of the qualities we most admire, and all the while, perhaps, what appears to us his or her deficiencies, are qualifications for the task or the position assigned to them by Providence. There are uses for timid spirits, weak frames, and broken hearts, little dreamed of by those who, in the pride of health and mental vigour, know little of their value.

Some further conversation took place between the neighbours, which ended by d'Auban's promising to draw up an agreement based on M. de Chambelle's proposal. It was further decided that they would take this paper to the Mission of St. Francis, and request Father Maret and another French *habitant* to witness its signature. A day or two afterwards this was accordingly done. M. de Chambelle rubbed his hands in a transport of delight, and complimented Father Maret on the beauty of his church, in which he had never set his foot. The missionary was amused at hearing himself called M. l'Abbé, and took an opportunity, whilst his guest was flitting about his rose-bushes like a superannuated butterfly, to ask d'Auban for the history of his new partner.

"I am almost ashamed to own how little I know of him," was his answer.

And then he gave a brief account of the arrival of these strangers—of the purchase of St. Agathe, and M. de Chambelle's total inability to manage the concession. When Father Maret had heard the particulars, he smiled and said, "This partnership is, then, an act of charity. But take care, my dear friend, how you involve yourself with these people. I strongly advise you to be prudent. We have hitherto been rather out of the reach of adventurers, but there seems to me something a little suspicious in the apparent helplessness of this gentleman. Do not let pity or kindness throw you off your guard."

"If he were to turn out a rogue, which I hardly can believe possible, he could not do me any harm. You see he leaves every thing in my hands. I might cheat him, but he cannot injure me. I shall feel to understand him better when I have seen his daughter. Is it not strange her shutting herself up so entirely?"

"There seems to me something strange about the whole affair. Have you sent his cheque to New Orleans?"

"Yes, and took the opportunity of asking M. Dumont what he knew about him; but months may elapse, as you know, before I get an answer."

"The daughter is, to my mind, the most doubtful feature in the case. It is not often that European women of good character come out to the colonies. Who knows what this one may be? It is not impossible that all this hiding is only a trick by which she hopes to pique your curiosity, and interest your feelings. But here comes your friend. Poor old man! He certainly does not look like an impostor."

The partners took their leave. As they walked away, it was impossible not to be struck by the contrast presented by d'Auban's tall figure and firm step, and his companion's un-

graceful form and shuffling gait, or to see the latter's admiring confiding manner towards his companion and doubt its sincerity. The priest could not, however, divest himself of a vague apprehension as to the character and designs of the strangers. Experience had taught him sad lessons with regard to colonial speculators, and his fatherly affection for d'Auban made him suspicious of their designs. It was in Russia that the intimacy between these two men had begun, and in America it had deepened into friendship. There was a difference of at least twenty years between their ages. Father Maret was bent with toil, and his countenance bore the traces of a life of labour and privations. When at rest, melancholy was its characteristic expression, as if continual contact with sin and sorrow had left its impress upon it; but when he conversed with others, it was with a bright and gracious smile. His step, though heavy, was rapid, as that of a man who, weary and exhausted, yet hastens on in the service of God. His head fell slightly forward on his breast, and his hair was thin and gray, but in his eye there was a fire, and in his manner and language an energy which did not betoken decay of body or mind.

The first years he had spent in America had been very trying. Till d'Auban's arrival he had seldom been cheered by intercourse with those who could share in his interests or his anxieties, or afford him the mental relief which every educated person finds in the society of educated men. Some of the Indian Christians were models of piety and full of childlike faith and amiability; but there must always exist an intellectual gulf between minds untrained and uncultivated, and those which have been used from childhood upward to live almost as much in the

past as in the present; and this is even the case to a certain degree as regards religion. The advantage in this respect may not always be on the side of civilization and of a high amount of mental culture. There is often in persons wise unto salvation and ignorant of all else, a simplicity of faith, a clear realization of its great truths and unhesitating acceptance of its teachings, which may very well excite admiration and something like envy in those whom an imperfect, and therefore deceptive, knowledge misleads, and who are sometimes almost weary of the multiplicity of their own thoughts. But it is nevertheless impossible that they should not miss, in their intercourse with others, the power of association which links their religious belief with a whole chain of reminiscences, and connects it with a number of outlying regions bordering on its domain. Viewed in the light of faith, art, science, literature, history, politics, every achievement of genius, every past and present event, every invention, every discovery, has a peculiar significance. Names become beacons in the stream of time—signal lights, bright or lurid as may be, which the lapse of ages never extinguishes. This continued train of thought, this kingdom of association, this region of sympathy, is the growth of centuries, and to forego familiarity with it one of the greatest sacrifices which a person of intellectual habits can make. D'Auban's society and friendship had filled up this void in Father Maret's existence, and there was another far greater trial which his residence in this settlement had tended to mitigate.

In New France, as in all recently-discovered countries, a missionary's chief difficulty consisted not in converting the natives, or (a greater one) in keeping them from relapsing into

witchcraft and idolatry—not in the wearisome pursuit of his scattered sheep over morasses, sluggish streams, and dreary savannahs—but in the bad example set by the European settlers. It was the hardened irreligion, the scoffing spirit, the profligate lives of the emigrants swarming on the banks of the Mississippi, tainting and polluting the forests and prairies of this new Eden with their vile passions and remorseless thirst for gold, which wrung the heart of the Christian priest, and brought a blush to his cheek when the Indians asked—"Are the white men Christians? Do they worship Jesus?"

He felt sometimes inclined to answer, "No; their god is mammon, a very hateful idol." To make his meaning clear, he used to show them a piece of gold, and to say that for the sake of that metal many a baptized European imperilled his immortal soul. The Indians of the Mission got into the habit of calling gold the white man's manitou, that is, his domestic idol. It became, therefore, an immense consolation to Father Maret when a Frenchman came into the neighbourhood whom he could point out to the native converts as an example of the practical results of true religion. He was wont to say that d'Auban's goodness and Thérèse's virtues made more converts than his sermons. His own example he, of course, counted for nothing. It was not, then, extraordinary that he should feel anxious about the character of the new inhabitants of St. Agathe, and

their probable intimacy with his friend. He had often regretted that one so well fitted for domestic life and social enjoyments should be cut off by circumstances from congenial society. The amount of friendly intercourse which was amply sufficient for his own need of relaxation could not be so for one whose solitary existence was an accident, not a vocation. He might not be conscious of it as yet, but with advancing years the want of a home and of friends was sure to be more keenly felt. Glad, indeed, would he have been to think that his partnership, that these new acquaintances, were likely to fill up this void, and to prove a blessing to his friend. Never was a more fervent prayer breathed for another's weal than that which rose from Father Maret's heart that night for the companion of his solitude. None feel more solicitude for the happiness, or more sympathy with the trials of others, than those who have renounced earthly happiness themselves. There is something in their sympathy akin to a mother's love or a guardian angel's pity.

Thérèse met the priest as he was turning back towards the village. After saluting him in the Indian fashion, she said, "The eagle spreads his wings over the nest of the white dove. The strong befriends the weak. It is good, my father."

"I hope so," the black robe kindly answered, as he led the way into the church, where the people were assembling for evening prayer.

CHAPTER III.

The present hour repeats upon its strings
 Echoes of some vague dream we have forgot;
 Dim voices whisper half-remembered things,
 And when we pause to listen—answer not.

Forebodings come, we know not how or whence,
 Shadowing a nameless fear upon the soul,
 And stir within our hearts a subtler sense
 Than light may read, or wisdom may control.

And who can tell what secret links of thought
 Bind heart to heart? Unspoken things are heard,
 As if within our deepest selves was brought
 The soul, perhaps, of some unuttered word.

Adelaide Proctor.

M. DE CHAMBELLE, no longer the manager of a concession, trod the earth with a lighter step, and strolled through the plantations, bowing affably to the negroes and chatting with those of the labourers who spoke French or German. As to d'Auban, he applied himself to the business he had undertaken with his usual energy and intelligence—an additional amount of labour was a boon to him. He had "the frame of adamant and soul of fire," to which work is as necessary as food or air. He was glad also to adopt, with regard to the slaves on the St. Agathe estate, the measures he had successfully carried out for the benefit of his own labourers. Though he had not yet seen Madame de Moldau, the very thought of a European lady such as Thérèse had described her living so near him, in the house he used to call a folly, seemed to make a difference in his life. At all hours of the day he pictured her to himself, and tried to imagine her existence within those four walls, with no other companion than her garrulous old father, who chattered as if he could keep nothing to himself, and yet never dropped a word that threw light on her sorrow or her story,

whatever it was, or gave the least clue to their past history.

One evening, as he was passing through the shrubbery, he caught sight of her on the balcony of the pavillon. Her head was thrown back as if to catch the breeze just beginning to rise at the close of a sultry day. He stood riveted to the spot. "She is very beautiful," he said, half aloud, "much more beautiful than I expected." She turned her head and their eyes met, which made him start and instantly draw back. He was distressed at having been surprised gazing at her, but he could not help feeling glad he had seen her at last. Who was she like? Very like somebody he had seen before, but he could not remember where. "I am sure her face is not a new one to me," he thought. "How intensely blue her eyes are! What a very peculiar-looking person she is! Her dress is different, too, from any thing we see here. What was it? A black silk gown, I think, opening in front, and a lace cap fastened on each side with coral pins. What a start she gave when she saw me! I am so sorry I took her by surprise. I ought of all things to have avoided the appearance of a rude vul-

gar curiosity." That self-reproach occupied him all the evening. He made it an excuse to himself for thinking of nothing but Madame de Moldau. He was at once excited and depressed. All sorts of fancies, some sad and some pleasant, passed through his mind. Europe with all his associations rose before him, conjured up by the sight of that pale woman dressed in black.

For the first time since leaving France a vague yearning, half regret, half presentiment, filled his heart. Can we doubt that there are such things as presentiments? True, we are sometimes haunted by a besetting thought, or we have an agitating dream, or we are seized by an unaccountable depression which we consider as a foreboding of coming evil, of some event which, in the poet's words, casts its shadows before it, and the thought passes away, the dream fades in the light of morning, a draught of spring's delicious air or a ray of genial sunshine dispels the melancholy which a moment before seemed incurable, and the voice which rang in our ear like a warning, subsides amidst the busy sounds of life, leaving no echo behind it. True, this frequently happens, and yet in spite of these deceptions, we cannot altogether disbelieve in the occasional occurrence of subtle and mysterious intimations which forbade future events, and, like whispers from heaven, prepare our souls for coming joys or sorrows. Was it an effect of memory, or a trick of the imagination, or a simple delusion, which played the fool that night with d'Auban's well-regulated mind, suggesting to him a fantastic resemblance between the face he had seen that evening and a vision of his earlier years? Was it a presentiment of happiness or a warning of evil which stirred the calm depths of his tranquil soul as he mused on days gone by? He did not know; he did not analyze his feel-

ings, but gave himself up to a long reverie, in which, like in a drowning man's dream, the events of his life passed successively before him with a strange distinctness. How the remembrance of our childhood comes back to us as we advance in life! We lose sight of it amidst the noise and excitement of youth and middle age; but when the shades of evening fall, and the busy hum of voices subsides, and silence steals on the soul as it spreads over a darkening landscape, the thought returns of what we were when we started on that long journey now drawing to a close. And even in the noon-tide of life there are seasons when we pause and look back as d'Auban did that night. When the future assumes a new aspect, and we dimly foresee a change in our destiny, without discerning its form, even as a blind man is conscious of approach to an object he does not yet touch or behold, a feeling of this sort sometimes drives us back upon the past, as to a friend left behind, and well-nigh lost sight of.

On the following evening to the one when d'Auban had for the first time seen Madame de Moldau, her father walked into his room and in a tone of unusual importance and animation invited him to dinner for the next day. The blood mounted into d'Auban's face. He longed to accept, but pride disinclined him to do so. After the great reluctance she had evinced to see him, he did not like to thrust himself into her society by availing himself of an invitation which only gratitude or civility had, in all probability, induced her to send. He accordingly made some not very intelligible excuse.

"Ah! my dear friend," exclaimed M. de Chambelle, "you must not refuse; it is impossible you can refuse."

It was with a pained expression of countenance that this remonstrance was

made. The old man seemed shocked and hurt.

"Indeed, my dear sir," said d'Auban kindly, "my only reason for refusing is, that I fear my presence will not be acceptable to your daughter, and perhaps compel her, as she did before, to keep her own room."

"Ah! that was because she had a headache. Of course you would not wish her to appear if she was ill."

"Of course not. I only wish you would not consider yourself obliged to invite me; I assure you I do not expect it."

"But she wishes to see you, and thank you for all your kindness and civility. Indeed, I cannot tell her that you refuse to come."

"Well, if you make a point of it, I shall be happy to accept your kind invitation. At what o'clock do you dine?"

"At one," answered M. de Chambelle; and then recovering his spirits he added, "Our *cuisine*, I am sorry to say, is of the New World school, in spite of all my efforts to instruct our Indian vatel in the mysteries of French cooking; but having witnessed the hermit-like nature of your repasts, I am not afraid of your despising the roasted kid and wild ducks which the female savage has provided for our entertainment. We will add to it a little glass of 'essence of fire,' as the Indians call our good French cognac. Well, I will not take up your time now. To-morrow at one o'clock; you will not forget."

When he had reached the door, M. de Chambelle turned back again, and, laying his hand on d'Auban's arm, he said in a tremulous voice:

"You will not be angry if she should change her mind and not appear to-morrow? Her spirits are very unequal; you don't know what she has gone through."

He was a poor creature enough this old M. de Chambelle, and d'Auban had difficulty sometimes in not despising the weakness and frivolity he evinced in the midst of troubles, into which he had so recklessly plunged himself; but he never heard him speak of his daughter without noticing a kind of pathos in his voice and manner, which redeemed in his eyes his childishness and folly, and softened his feelings towards him. He assured him that he would not take any thing amiss, and promised to be punctual at the appointed time. And so he was; and on his way to St. Agathe he kept inwardly reproaching and laughing at himself for the timidity he felt at the thought of being introduced to Madame de Moldau, and at the fear he had that after all she would not appear. When he came in sight of the pretty fanciful toy of a house, a specimen of European refinement in the midst of the oaks and pines of an American forest, it no longer struck him as so out of place as it was wont to do when he ridiculed M. de Harlay's Folly, and blamed its erection as the idle whim of a Parisian's fancy. The woman he had seen surrounded by shining evergreens and roses in full blossom, like a lovely picture framed in flowerets, seemed a fitting inhabitant for this earthly paradise.

It had never showed to such advantage, in his eyes at least, as on this day. The brilliant foliage was shining in the full radiance of noon. The avenue of magnolias leading to the little rustic porch was fragrant with incense-like perfume. Not a breath stirred the branches of the encircling cedars. Beautiful birds, like winged jewels flying through the translucent air, gave life and animation to the scene, and insects lazily hovered over masses of scented woodbine, their wings weighed down with honey, and their drowsy hum lulling the ear.

M. de Chambelle was standing at the door looking out for his guest. He seemed more fidgety still than usual as he conducted him to the room where his daughter usually sat, and then went, as he said, to inform her of his arrival. She came directly; and if d'Auban had admired her from a distance, he now did so a thousand times more. The sweetness of her countenance, the exquisite delicacy of her complexion, the pathetic expression (no other word would express it) of her large and very blue eyes, surpassed in beauty any thing he could call to mind; and yet again the feeling came over him that it was not the first time he had seen that charming face, or heard that sweet voice, he mentally added, when she thanked him with a gentle dignity of manner for all he had done to make her comfortable at St. Agathe.

"It is one of the loveliest places I have ever beheld," she said.

What touched him most was that he saw, from the quivering of her lip and the fluctuating colour of her cheek, that she was making an effort over herself in order to welcome him. Notwithstanding this visible emotion, her manner was quiet and self-possessed. He felt, on the contrary, as awkward and stupid as possible, and scarcely knew what to say in return for her acknowledgments. Man of the world as he once had been, he was quite at a loss on this occasion. She was such a different person from what he might have expected to see. At last he said, "My friend, M. de Harlay, little imagined when he built this pavillon, or rather when he abandoned it two years ago, Madame, that it would have the good fortune to be so soon inhabited by a European lady. What in my ignorance I deemed a folly has turned out an inspiration. We emigrants are apt to build for ourselves barns or cabins rather than houses."

"Is not your home behind those trees, M. d'Auban?"

"Madame, it is that plain square building near the river."

"Oh, I see it; near those trees with the large white flowers."

"Are you fond of flowers, Madame de Moldau?"

"Could one venture to say one did not care about them?" She said this with one of those smiles which hover on the lips without in the least altering the melancholy expression of the eyes.

"In this new world, Madame," he answered, "may we not venture to say anything, even the truth?"

Madame de Moldau blushed, and said rather quickly, "I find almost as much difference between one flower and another as between different persons. Some are beautiful but uninteresting, others decidedly repulsive, and some without any beauty at all are nevertheless charming. Violets, for instance, and mignonette. It has often struck me that a pretty book might be written on the characters of flowers."

"I quite agree with you, Madame, not only about flowers, but as to all the objects which surround us. It is often difficult to tell why certain landscapes, certain animals—nay, certain faces—have a charm quite independent of beauty. It is, however, easier to discover what captivates us in a human countenance than in a landscape or a flower."

"I suppose, sir, there are secret sympathies, mysterious affinities, between our great parent nature and ourselves which are felt, but cannot be explained?"

"Nature is indeed a teacher, or rather a book full of instruction, but it is not every one who has the key to its secrets."

"I should think that in this desert you must have had many opportunities of gaining possession of this important key."

"No doubt there are lessons broad-scattered on the surface of nature which he who runs may read, but my life here has been too busy a one for much study or thought."

"How long, sir, have you been in this country?"

"Five years."

"Five years! Almost a lifetime."

D'Auban smiled. "That lifetime has seemed to me very short."

"Indeed! Have you become accustomed to the monotony of this forest scenery?"

"Not merely accustomed, but attached to it."

"What! do you not feel oppressed by its death-like stillness? It puts me in mind of being becalmed at sea.

Tiefe Stille herrscht im Wasser,
Und bekümmert sieht der Fischer
Glatte Fläche rings umher.
Keine Luft von keiner Seite,
Todesstille fürchterlich;
In die ungeheure Weite
Reget keine Welle sich.

Do you understand German, M. d'Auban?"

"Not enough, Madame, to seize the sense of those lines. I have always heard that a calm at sea is more awful than a storm. And you have gone through that trial?"

"O yes, it was horrible; not a sound, not a breeze, not a ripple, on that smooth leaden sea for more than ten days; and eight hundred emigrants on board a crowded vessel!"

"Good heavens, Madame, how you must have suffered! But does the solitude of our grand forests, teeming as they do with animal life, and full of every variety of vegetable production, affect you in the same manner?"

"There is, I must confess, a similarity in the effect both have upon me."

"We have sometimes winds here which play rough games with the

topmost branches of our evergreen oaks."

"Ah, well do I know it," Madame de Moldau answered, with one of her joyless smiles. "The very day we arrived a hurricane almost destroyed our boat. Simon was much alarmed. I suppose you know him, M. d'Auban? He says, he has the honour of being acquainted with you."

"I have long had the advantage or the disadvantage, whichever it is, of his acquaintance. He is quite a character. His boats, such as they are, prove a great convenience to emigrants; but how you, Madame de Moldau, could endure the hardships of such a voyage, I am at a loss to conceive."

"Is there any thing one cannot endure?" This was said with some bitterness. "The voyage was bad enough," she continued, before he had time to answer, "but not so bad as the landing. Oh, that first night in an Indian hut! The smell, the heat, the mosquitoes, that winged army of tormentors! Is it because we are farther removed from the river that they do not assail us so much here?"

"Partly so, perhaps; but they always attack new-comers with extraordinary virulence."

"Have you lived alone all this time, M. d'Auban?"

"M. de Harlay remained with me two years; and I often see Father Maret, the priest of the neighbouring Mission. During the hunting season I accompany him in his wanderings."

"In search of game?"

"I pursue the game. He follows about his wandering flock in their encampments in the forests and near the great lakes."

At that moment M. de Chambelle announced that dinner was ready. Madame de Moldau rose, and d'Auban offered to conduct her to the hall which

served as a dining-room. There was a slight hesitation in her manner which caused him hastily to draw back. The colour which only occasionally visited her cheek rushed into it now. She held out her hand and lightly laid it on his. He felt it tremble, and became so confused that he hardly knew what he was doing. He had been accustomed to the best, which in those days meant the most aristocratic, society in Europe, and had often dined with princes. How was it, then, that in that log-built house, sitting between the old man, whose affairs he had consented to manage out of sheer compassion, and his young and gentle daughter, he should feel so embarrassed?

As they sat down she pointed to a sprig of jessamine in a nosegay on the table, and said: "There is a flower that has both beauty and charm."

"Yes," he answered, "and purity and sweetness also. One would not dare to deal roughly with so delicate a flower."

He thought there was a likeness between that white jessamine and the woman by his side.

She was very silent during dinner.

M. de Chambelle's eyes were always glancing towards her, and he seemed distressed at her eating so little. Once he got up to change her plate and offer her some other dish than the one she had been helped to. Before the meal was over she complained of being tired, and withdrew to the sitting-room. During the time which elapsed before she joined them, d'Auban found it very difficult to attend to his host's rambling discourse. His mind was running on the peculiarity of Madame de Moldau's manner. He could not quite satisfy himself as to the nature of this peculiarity. Nothing could be sweeter than her countenance; her voice was charming; her way of speaking courteous: but there was at the same time something a little abrupt and even slightly

imperious in it, which did not take away from her attractiveness, for it was neither unfeminine nor ungracious: but he could quite believe what M. de Chambelle had said, that when she was bent on any thing it was not easy to oppose her. "I suppose" (he thought) "that she has been so idolized by her father that she takes his devotion as a matter of course; and it would indeed be extraordinary if he was not devoted to such a daughter. Had I forgotten," he asked himself, "what refined, well-educated women are like, or is this one very superior to what they generally are?"

When at last they left the dining-room and joined Madame de Moldau she made a sign to him to seat himself by her side, and, pointing to the view, said with a smile, "Your beloved woods and prairies."

"Would," he earnestly said, "that I might be so happy as to teach you to love them."

She looked steadfastly before her with a fixed gaze, but it did not seem to rest on the river or on the waning foliage. Tears gathered in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. D'Auban saw her father watching her with painful solicitude, and, not knowing how to break the silence which ensued, he turned away and looked at the books which were lying on the table. When we are for any reason interested about any one, how eagerly we take notice of what they read, and try in this way to form some idea of their tastes and opinions! Sometimes in a railway carriage or on a bench in a public garden, we see a person absorbed in a book, and if there is any thing about them which in the least excites our interest, we long to know what sort of thoughts are awakened by the volume in their hands—what feelings it touches—what emotions it excites—what amount of truth or of falsehood, of evil or good, of food

or of poison, is conveyed in the pages so eagerly perused! What a wonderful thing a book is when we come to think of it! how much more we know of those we hold converse with by means of their writings than of many with whose faces we are familiar, whom we have listened to and talked to perhaps for years, without ever giving a real insight into their minds or their characters! What deep and vehement feelings have been often stirred up by the silent adversaries, the mute antagonists we encounter in the solitude of our chambers! What earnest protests we have mentally uttered when our faith has been outraged or our consciences wounded! What blessings we have showered on the writer who eloquently expresses what we ourselves have thought and felt—who defends with courage what we deem sacred and true—gives a tangible form to our vague imaginings, and raises us in his powerful grasp to the level of his own intellect! What friends of this kind we most of us have had, those at whose feet we sat when the first dawnings of intelligence threw a doubtful light on our minds—those to whom we paid an almost idolatrous worship in youth—those who have been to us fathers though they knew us not, teachers though they recked not of us, guides and comforters as life advanced, “companions on its downward way!”

The books on Madame de Moldau’s table were the “*Maxims of La Rochefoucauld*,” “*Plutarch’s Lives*,” a volume of *Corneille’s Tragedies*, and a German translation of the *Psalms*.

“Is this your travelling library, Madame de Moldau?” d’Auban asked, for the purpose of breaking a silence which was becoming awkward.

“About the whole of it, I think,” was her answer. “It is impossible to travel with many luxuries, not even intellectual ones.”

“Would it be impertinent to ask if choice or chance influenced their selection?”

“Oh, chance decided it, like every thing else in one’s fate.”

“Surely you do not think that the world is governed by chance?” d’Auban exclaimed.

“I suppose I ought to have used the word providence,” Madame de Moldau answered in a careless tone.

D’Auban could not repress a sigh. “It would be so dreadful,” he gently said, “to suffer, and think it was the result of accident.” He had taken up the volume of *German Psalms* and was turning over its pages. Madame de Moldau saw it in his hands, and gave a rapid anxious look at her father, who jumped up, snatched the book from him, and, rushing to the window, pretended to kill an insect with it. “These mosquitoes are dreadfully troublesome,” he cried. “I really must get a net or something to hang up against this window;” and he hurried out of the room, with the volume in his hand.

“If any of my books could amuse you, Madame de Moldau,” d’Auban said, “I should be only too happy if you would make use of my little library. I have thirty or forty volumes at my house. Nothing very new, but most of them worthy of more than one perusal.”

“You are very kind. Perhaps you will allow me some day to look at them? Have you seen this volume of *Corneille’s Tragedies*? I like them much better than *Racine’s*.”

“I saw the *Cid* acted at St. Petersburg some years ago. The Czar preferred *Corneille* to all other dramatic writers.”

“Buffoonery and low comedy are supposed to be what he likes best, I believe.”

“I suppose that in tastes as well as in other things extremes sometimes meet.

And how difficult it is to form a just estimate of that extraordinary man's character!"

"M. de Chambelle tells me you were at one time in his service. You must have admired his genius, his great qualities?"

"I admired the sovereign who, almost single-handed, changed the face of an empire, the man whose energy and perseverance effected in a few years the work of centuries; but a nearer acquaintance with this great barbarian completely changed the nature of this admiration. Wonder remained, but unaccompanied with respect. How can one respect a man who is the slave of his own passions, whose remorseless cruelty and coarse brutality are a disgrace to human nature, and who is wanting in some of its noblest attributes? The religious element does not seem to exist in him. He respects neither God nor man."

"I have heard that he can be very kind—that he often shows good and generous feelings. I believe there are people who have reasons to be deeply grateful to him. It is true that he has no religion, but there is, perhaps, nothing very uncommon in that. He goes through the forms of his Church. This is all that is expected from persons in his position."

"Had you been acquainted with the details of the Czar's life, Madame de Moldau, with its degrading immorality and its brutal coarseness, you would not be deluded into admiration by the brilliant side of his character."

"I did not speak of what was brilliant, but of what I have heard of his kindness."

"He was kind to me," d'Auban said,—"very kind to me once. I had hoped to devote my life to his service. I tried to look on the grand side of his character, on the prodigious results of his

genius. I entered into his views, felt proud of his notice."

"And what happened then? You lost his favour?"

"No; he did not change; I did. Ah! Madame, there are moments in a man's life he cannot speak of without emotion."

"Far be it from me to intrude on your recollections," said Madame de Moldau. "In this new world the past should not be reverted to."

"Why so, Madame de Moldau? Because we have left behind us country and friends, because we are cut off from old associations, and our lot is cast amidst new interests and new scenes, why should we bury in silence all past reminiscences, and make graves of our memories?"

"That was not my meaning," she said, "but only that I did not wish to ask indiscreet questions."

"You need have no fears of that kind," d'Auban answered, with a frank smile. "My life has been full of vicissitudes, but there have been no secrets in it."

A burning blush overspread Madame de Moldau's face; she coloured to the very roots of her hair. M. de Chambelle, who was slaughtering mosquitoes, turned round and saw that she looked agitated. He said a few words to her in German. She nodded assent, and then apologized to d'Auban for leaving him. "I am very tired," she said; "but it is not you who have tired me," she quickly added; "only I have been out of the habit of talking lately. Are we not very silent people, my dear old father?"

M. de Chambelle, as he opened the door for her, answered this question by a sad and wistful look, and an inclination of the head.

During the ensuing hour d'Auban thought he did not deserve to be "taxed for silence," but rather checked

for speech. He chattered with the happy talent some people possess of talking immensely, without leaving on the listener's mind any definite idea as to what they have been saying. Twice during that time his daughter sent for him, and on both occasions he instantly obeyed the summons.

As he accompanied his guest on his way home he said to him: "I wish we could find a French or German servant to wait on Madame de Moldau. You do not, I suppose, know of such a person?"

"No, indeed, I do not. There are so few respectable European women in these settlements. I wonder if the bargeman Simon's daughter could be induced to accept the situation?"

"What! the black-eyed young lady who acts as stewardess during the voyage? My dear sir, she would indeed be a treasure. Madame de Moldau took quite a fancy to her, I remember. Pray open negotiations with that young individual."

"As soon as Maitre Simon returns from the Arkansas, where he went with some travellers a few days ago, I will see what can be done."

During the following week d'Auban sent game and fish and fruit and flowers to St. Agathe, and received in return courteous messages, and at last a little note from Madame de Moldau.

"SIR: I see you mean to compel me to admire the forests, fields, and streams which furnish the luxuries you send me. I am obliged to admit that nature has lavished her gifts on this favoured region, and that if its aspect is mountainous its productions are full of beauty and variety. Accept my best thanks, and the assurance of my sincere regard.
C. DE M."

He sometimes strolled by the river-side and through the neighbouring

thickets, in the hope that the lady of St. Agathe would resume her evening walks in the direction of the village, and that he might find an opportunity of introducing her to Father Maret and Thérèse. But she seemed to have lost all taste for walking, and he had not seen her since the day he dined there, neither in the garden nor at the window. But one morning M. de Chambelle called and asked him to pay his daughter a visit without letting her know that he had begged him to do so.

"It would give me great pleasure," he answered; "but I am sure Madame de Moldau, though she is very kind and civil to me, much prefers my staying away."

He would have been very sorry not to be contradicted, for he longed to be sitting again in the little drawing-room at St. Agathe, watching the varying expression of the lady's most expressive countenance, and, as it were, feeling his way as he approached any new subject of conversation. A white jessamine encircled by a fringe of sensitive leaves would be a fitting emblem, he thought, of the mistress of St. Agathe. He had once amused himself in bygone years in overcoming the shyness of a beautiful Italian greyhound, one of those delicate creatures who are afraid of the notice they court, and shrink from a caress as from a blow. He remembered how pleased he was the first time Flora condescended to take a bit of biscuit from his hand, and then laid on his arm her slender snow-white paw, as a hint she wanted more. He could not help smiling at the analogy between those efforts to win the good graces of the four-footed beauty, and his present endeavours to induce Madame de Moldau to feel at her ease with him. He was pleased when M. de Chambelle said, "If she once gets used to your society, it will

become an enjoyment to her, and perhaps you would be able to persuade her not to sit all day at the window gazing on the view, and never uttering a word. Is there nothing we could do to amuse her?"

The notion of amusement in the kind of life they were leading was a novel one to d'Auban, and he was not prepared to answer the question at once. But after thinking a little he said:

"If she cared for fine scenery we might row her in my boat to the Falls some way up the river—to what the Indians call the Minne Haha or Laughing Water, or perhaps it might interest her to form a collection of birds at St. Agathe. You might have an aviary here without much trouble. But as she does not care for flowers, neither would birds be any pleasure to her I am afraid, nor scenery either."

"She used to like flowers. Never mind what she says; I see she is pleased when you send her a nosegay. And the fish yesterday was very good. She dined upon it, and thought it the best thing she had tasted since we came here. I wish she would sometimes take a walk. She walked too much when we were at the German village, but now she says it tires her."

"Would she ride?"

"Ah! she used to delight in it; but how could we get a suitable horse for her?"

"I think one of mine would carry her very well if we could procure a side-saddle. There are beautiful glades in the forest. We might accompany her on foot, or I would lend you my pony."

M. de Chambelle's face lengthened at this suggestion. "I am but a poor horseman," he said. "Still, if she wished it. But do you think we could catch a squirrel? I saw her watching one yesterday, when we were sitting at the window."

"Your young negro would be charmed, I dare say, to attempt its capture."

"Ah! I dare say he would. And will you come and see her to-day?"

"I am obliged to visit a distant part of your plantation; you have doubled my business, you know."

"Oh dear, how tired you must be!" exclaimed M. de Chambelle in a compassionate tone.

D'Auban laughed.

"Not at all, I assure you. I only meant that I was not much burthened with leisure; but if I am not too late, I will do myself the honour of calling at St. Agathe on my way home."

CHAPTER IV.

Oh! deep is a wounded heart, and strong
 A voice that cries against mighty wrong;
 And full of death, as a hot wind's blight,
 Doth the ire of a crushed affection light.

Mrs. Hemans.

Oh! there never was yet so pretty a thing
 By racing river or bubbling spring—
 Nothing that ever so merrily grew
 Up from the ground when the skies were blue—
 Nothing so fresh, nothing so free,
 As thou—my wild, wild cherry-tree.

Barry Cornwall.

The blessing fell upon her soul:
 Her angel by her side
 Knew that the hour of grace was come;
 Her soul was purified. *Adelaide Proctor.*

D'AUBAN's business was quickly despatched that day. He galloped back across the prairie faster than usual, and dismounting at the foot of the hill of St. Agathe, he left his horse to make his way home, and walked to the pavillion. The heat had been oppressive, but a refreshing breeze was now beginning to stir the leaves and to ripple the surface of the river. The first thing he saw on approaching the house was M. de Chambelle and his ally Sambo carrying a couch across the lawn. They placed it in the shade of some wide-spreading trees, and the former beckoned to him to join them.

"Oh, what a beautiful nosegay!" he exclaimed. "Run, Sambo, run, and get a vase filled with water and a little table from the parlour. Your bouquet will give an *air de fête*, dear M. d'Auban, to our *salon d'été*. Look what a magnificent dome of verdure and what a soft mossy carpet we have got here. She is coming in a moment to breathe a little fresh air. It has been so hot today."

He gave a delighted look at his little

arrangements, and then said he would fetch his daughter; but when half-way to the house he turned back to whisper to d'Auban. "She will not care about the birds, I think; but I should not be surprised if she was to allow herself to be rowed in the boat some day. She said Laughing Water was a pretty name for a waterfall." Then he went off again, and d'Auban sat down on the grass, musing over the half-provoking, half-amusing manner in which M. de Chambelle presupposed his interest and enlisted his services in his daughter's behalf. "The poor old man," he thought, "seems to take it for granted every one must share his infatuation." But when she appeared on the lawn, and he was greeted by her beautiful smile and heard again the sound of her sweet voice, the ungracious feeling vanished. He no longer wondered; on the contrary, it seemed to him quite natural that he and every one else in the world should be expected to pay her homage. She sat down and said to her father, "Will you get a chair for M. d'Auban?"

"Not for the world," d'Auban cried; 'the grass is my favourite seat. But where will *you* sit, M. de Chambelle?" he asked in rather a pointed manner.

She blushed a little and made room for her father by her side; but he said he would do like M. d'Auban and sit on the grass. After a few minutes' conversation about the plantation which they had just purchased, Madame de Moldau asked him to fetch her fan which she had left in the verandah.

"I am afraid, sir," she then said, addressing d'Auban, "that you have undertaken for our sakes a heavy amount of labour."

"Madame," he answered, "I am not afraid of labour, and if I can succeed in furthering your interests and relieving you from anxiety, I shall be amply repaid for my exertions. May I hope that you are becoming reconciled to this new world, which must have seemed to you so desolate at first? Are you beginning to take an interest in its natural beauties, and to think you could find happiness in this solitude?"

"What pleases me most in it is its solitude, and I do not think of the future at all. Is not that what moralists say is wisdom, M. d'Auban?"

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," he answered, with a smile. "The Bible teaches us that morality. But man cannot live without hope, earthly or heavenly."

"I don't think so, or I should have died long ago." These last words were uttered in so low a voice that he did not hear them, and then, as if to change the subject, she said: "Nothing could have been so advantageous to my poor father as this partnership with you. He has not, I suppose, the least idea of business?"

"Not much, Madame. But he furnishes capital, an important item."

Madame de Moldau coloured as if about to say something which cost her

an effort. "Are you sure, M. d'Auban, that you have not done yourself an injustice—that your agreement with him is quite a fair one? I know he would not take advantage of your kindness, but he might not know—"

"You need have no fears on this point, Madame. The agreement is a perfectly reasonable one. I assure you that we colonists are very sharp-sighted about our interests."

"Then I am satisfied," and she fell into one of the dreamy reveries which seemed habitual to her.

He interrupted it by saying, "May I venture, Madame, to ask you the same question you put to me just now? What have you been doing to-day?"

"Only what Italians say it is sweet to do—nothing."

"And do you find it sweet?"

"Not in the German settlement, but here I rather like it."

"You must want rest after your dreadful voyage. I wonder you had the courage to undertake it."

"I am not much afraid of anything," and then, as if wishing once more to turn the conversation into another channel, she said, "I interrupted you the other day when you were about to tell me why you left Russia. I should very much like to hear what induced you to do so."

"I have seldom spoken of the circumstances which compelled me to it. When first I returned to France, my feelings on the subject were too acute, and here you can already perceive that there is scarcely any one with whom intimate conversation is possible. I had almost forgotten, Madame de Moldau, what it is to converse with a lady of cultivated mind and refined manners, and you can scarcely conceive what a new pleasure it is to one who for five years has lived so much alone, or with uncongenial companions."

"I can believe it," she said in a low

voice. "It is not the heart only which has need of sympathy. The mind also sometimes craves for it."

Her father returned at that moment with the fan. "Shall I fan you?" he asked as she held out her hand for it.

"No, thank you. There is more air now. But will you write that letter we were talking about just now? M. d'Auban will call you if I should want any thing; but as the barge may go this evening, it ought to be ready."

"Of course it ought," answered M. de Chambelle, and again he shuffled away with as much alacrity as before.

Madame de Moldau followed him with her eyes and said, "What a weight you have taken off his mind, M. d'Auban! He is quite another man since you have undertaken our affairs."

"How devotedly he loves you," d'Auban said with much feeling.

"He is indeed devotedly attached to me; no words can do justice to what his kindness has been." As she uttered these words, Madame de Moldau leant back her head against the cushion and closed her eyes. But tears forced their way through the closed eyelids.

D'Auban gazed silently at those trickling tears, and wondered whence they flowed. Were they bitter as the waters of Marah, or did they give evidence of a grief too sacred to be invaded? He ventured to say in a very low voice, "You have suffered a great deal," but she either did not or pretended not to hear him.

"You were going to tell me why you left Russia," she observed, in a somewhat abrupt tone.

He felt that the best way of winning her confidence would be to be open himself with her as to his own history and feelings.

"My prospects at the court of Russia," he began, "were in every way

promising; I had reason to believe that the emperor was favourably disposed towards me. General Lefort was kindness itself. I had lately been appointed to the command of a regiment. I must tell you that some time after my arrival at St. Petersburg, I had made an acquaintance with a young Russian lady whose father had a place at Court. Her name was Anna Vladislava. She was handsome—I thought so, at least—and at the same time was full of genius, wit, and youthful impetuosity. Hers was a fiery nature which had never known much control. She was fanatically attached to the customs and traditions of her country. We disagreed about every thing, religion, politics, books. We never met but we quarrelled. I was one of those foreigners whom, as a class, she held in abhorrence, and yet, strange to say, an attachment sprang up between us. The fearless independence of her character attracted me. It was a refreshing contrast with the servile, cringing spirit of the Czar's Court. She endeavoured to convert me to the orthodox religion, as it is called" (a faint scornful smile curled Madame de Moldau's lip), "and used to get exasperated at my obduracy. Still in the height of our disputes we behaved to each other as enemies, who were to be one day even more than friends. There was a mutual understanding between us, but no open engagement; of marriage we did not venture to speak. It would have endangered her father's position and prospects, and my own also, to have acknowledged such an intention. I had been given to understand that my imperial master had fixed upon a wife for me, and to have chosen one myself would have been a mortal offence; but we often met, and though our opinions continued as dissimilar as ever, there were points of sympathy in our char-

acters, and our mutual attachment increased.

"I had sometimes been a little anxious about Anna's freedom of speech. She allowed herself openly to inveigh against the Czar's conduct, and to express her dislike to his innovations. It was with a kind of natural eloquence peculiar to her that she was wont to hold forth about the old Muscovite traditions and the deteriorating influence of foreign manners and habits on the spirit of a nation. Poor Anna! poor bright and careless child! I remember asking her if she admired the national custom of husbands beating their wives, typified by the whip, which formed part of a bride's trousseau. I see before me her flashing smile. I hear her eager defence of that trait of patriarchal simplicity. 'A Russian woman,' she said, 'gloried in submission, and looked upon her husband as her master and her lord.' How little she looked for bondage, and yet I do believe she would have borne any thing from one she loved. But insult, shame, and torture. . . ."—d'Auban paused an instant. Madame de Moldau was listening to him, he felt it, with intense interest. He went on: "I used to comfort myself by the thought that the wild sallies of so young a girl could not bring her into serious trouble, and I was not aware of the extent to which her imprudence was carried. When quite a little child she had been taken notice of by the Princess Sophia, the Czar's sister, and had retained a grateful recollection of her kindness. She considered this Princess as a martyr to the cause of Holy Russia, and always spoke in indignant terms of her long imprisonment. During a lengthened absence I made from St. Petersburg she became intimate with some of this ambitious woman's friends, and was employed to convey letters to her agents. The Czar's sister was continu-

ally intriguing against her brother and striving to draw the nobles into her schemes. My poor Anna was made a tool of by this party; a plot was formed, and discovered by the Emperor. He was once more seized by the mad fury which possessed him at the time of the Strelitz revolt, and which caused him to torture his rebellious subjects with his own hands, to insult them in their agonies, and plunge into excesses of barbarity surpassing every thing on record, even in the annals of heathen barbarity. . . ."

Madame de Moldau raised herself from her reclining posture, and exclaimed, with burning cheeks and some emotion:

"Oh, M. d'Auban, what violent language you use! State necessity sometimes requires, for the suppression of rebellion, measures at which humanity shudders, but—"

"Ah! I had often said that to myself and to others—often tried to palliate these atrocities by specious reasonings. I had made light of the sufferings of others. Time and distance marvellously blunt the edge of indignation. Sophistry hardens the heart towards the victims, and we at last excuse what once we abhorred. But when cruelty strikes home, when the blow falls on our own heart, when the iron is driven into our own soul, then we know, then we feel, then comes the frightful temptation to curse and to kill. . . . Forgive me, I tire, I agitate you—you look pale."

"Never mind me. What happened?"

"When I returned to St. Petersburg, this was the news that met me. The girl I loved, and whom I had left gay as a bird and innocent as a child—she who had never known shame or suffering—she who had been led astray by others—was dead: and oh, my God, what a death was hers!"

"Was she put to death?" faintly asked Madame de Moldau.

"No, she was not condemned to death. This would have been mercy to one like her. She was scourged by the executioner, and, had she survived, was to be married to a common soldier, and sent to Siberia. But first reason and then life gave way under the shame and horror of her doom. The proud wild heart broke, and my poor Anna died raving mad. Her father was banished, and the house which had been a home to me I found desolate as a grave."

"You returned immediately to France?"

"My first impulse—a frantic one—was to take the papers I had brought from the Crimea to the Czar, and to stab him to the heart. May God forgive me the thought, soon disowned, soon repented of! It was a short madness, wrestled with and overcome on my knees, but when it had passed away nothing remained to me but to quit the country as quickly and as secretly as possible. I knew I could not endure to see the Emperor; to feel his hand laid familiarly as it had often been on my shoulder, or to witness his violence and coarse pleasantry, would have been torture. I feigned illness, disposed of my property, and effected my escape."

"And how soon afterwards did you come here?"

"About a year."

There was a pause. D'Auban felt a little disappointed that Madame de Moldau made no comment on his story. The next time she spoke, it was to say—"I wonder if suffering softens or hardens the heart?"

"I suppose that, like the heat of the sun on different substances, it hardens some and softens others. But the more I live, the more clearly I see how difficult it is to talk of suffering and happi-

ness without saying what sounds like nonsense."

"I do not understand you."

"What I mean is this: that there is very little happiness or suffering irrespective of the temper of mind or the physical constitution of individuals. I have seen so many instances of persons miserable in the possession of what would be generally considered as happiness, and others so happy in the midst of acknowledged evils, such as sickness, want, and neglect, that my ideas have quite changed since I thought prosperity and happiness and adversity and unhappiness were synonymous terms."

"Could you tell me of some of the instances you mean?"

"I could relate to you many instances of the happy, amidst apparent—aye, and real suffering too. It is not quite so easy to penetrate into the hearts of the prosperous and place a finger on the secret bruise. But has not your observation, Madame de Moldau, furnished you with such examples?"

"Perhaps so—are you happy?"

Few but the young, whose lives have been spent in perpetual sunshine, know quite how to answer this inquiry. With some the fountain of sorrow has been sealed up, built and bridged over by resignation, acquiescence, or simply by time. Its waters have been hallowed or sweetened, or dried up as may be, but it is like stirring the source afresh to put that question to one who has ever known deep suffering. D'Auban hesitated a moment before he answered it.

"I have been happier here," he said at last, "than I had ever been before. But it is quite a different kind of happiness from that which I had once looked forward to."

"Your sufferings must have been terrible at the time you were speaking

of. I felt it, M. d'Auban, but I could not at the moment utter a word of sympathy. It is always so with me." Her lip quivered, and he exclaimed:

"I know one heart which suffering has not hardened."

"Oh yes!" she answered with passionate emotion, "it has—hardened it into stone, and closed it for ever."

"Well, my dear sir, have you spoken to her about riding? Have you succeeded in amusing her?" whispered M. de Chambelle to d'Auban. He had finished his letter and hurried back with it from the house. But the conversation was so eager that his approach had not been noticed.

"Tiring her, I am afraid," said d'Auban; "but if you will second my proposal I will venture to plead for Bayard, who would carry you, Madame de Moldau, like a chevalier *sans peur et sans reproche*."

"I should not be myself *sans peur et sans reproche* if I accepted your kind offer. Not, I am afraid, *sans peur* at mounting him, and certainly not *sans reproche* for depriving you of your horse. But I am grateful, very grateful, for all your kindnesses." Her eyes were raised to his as she said this, with an expression which thrilled through his heart.

When she had taken leave of him, and was returning to the house, followed by M. de Chambelle, the latter turned back again to say, "You see she is pleased."

That that fair creature should be pleased seemed the only thing in the world he cared about. "Let Belinda but smile, and all the world was to be gay." D'Auban would have liked to see in her more affectionate warmth of manner towards her father; but he supposed she might be a little spoilt by his overweening affection.

"Above all things, you will not for-

get to inquire about the black-eyed dame de compagnie."

M. de Chambelle said this when, for the second time, he returned to d'Auban, after having escorted his daughter to the house. He followed her like her shadow, and she was apparently so used to this as not to notice it.

"I will not fail to do so; but Simonette is a wayward being, and may very likely altogether reject the proposal."

"Gold has, however, a wonderful power over Simon, and if you offer high wages, he may persuade his daughter to accept it. What a beautiful night it is!"

This was said as they approached the river, in which the starry sky was tremulously reflected. The moon was shedding her silvery light on the foliage and the waving grasses on its banks.

"What a fine thing rest is after a day of labour!" de Chambelle exclaimed as he stretched and smiled with a weary but happy look.

"If you sleep more soundly, M. de Chambelle, for having committed to me the management of your estate, I do from the increase of work it affords me. But we must really try and make your slaves Christians. Suppose we had a temporary chapel, and two priests, if we could get them, to preach a mission on this side of the river; you would not object to it?"

"Not to any thing you wish, my dear friend. And it might, perhaps, amuse Madame de Moldau."

D'Auban could not repress a smile. It seemed quite a new view of the question.

After M. de Chambelle had left him, he remained out late, attracted by the beauty of the night. Though tired, he did not feel inclined to retire to rest. A musing fit was upon him. He had become conscious that evening that he was in danger of falling in love with

Madame de Moldau. He had never yet been the better or the happier for this sort of interest in a woman. After the tragical end of the only person he had really cared for, he had made up his mind never to marry. But this resolution was not likely to remain proof against the attractions of so charming a person. It was the dread of suffering as he had suffered before; the fear of disappointment which had led him to form it, as well as the apparent hopelessness of meeting in the new world in which his destiny was cast with any woman capable of inspiring the sort of attachment without which, with what his friends called his romantic ideas, he could not understand happiness in marriage. It seemed the most improbable thing in the world that a refined, well-educated, beautiful, and gentle lady, should take up her residence in a wild and remote settlement, and yet such a one had unexpectedly come, almost without any apparent reason, as a visitant from another sphere. With her touching beauty, her secret sorrows, her strange helplessness, and her impenetrable reserve, she had, as it were, taken shelter by his side, and was beginning to haunt his waking hours and his nightly dreams with visions of a possible happiness, new and scarcely welcome to one who had attained peace and contentment in the solitary life he had so long led. In the Christian temple reared in the wilderness, in nature's forest sanctuaries, in the huts of the poor, by the dying bed of the exile, he had felt the peace he had sought to impart to others reflected in his own bosom. He had been contented with his fate. He had assented to the doom of loneliness, and foresaw nothing in the future between him and the grave but a tranquil course of duties fulfilled and privations acquiesced in. If he sometimes yearned for closer ties than those of friendship and charity—if rec-

ollections of domestic life such as he remembered it in the home of his childhood rose before him in solitary evenings, when the wind made wild music amidst the pine branches round his log-built house, and the rolling sound of the great river reminded him of the waves breaking on a far-off coast, he would forthwith plan some deed of mercy, some act of kindness, the thought of which generally succeeded in driving away these troublesome reminiscences. He felt almost inclined to be angry with Madame de Moldau for awakening in him feelings he had not intended ever to indulge again, visions of a kind of happiness he had tacitly renounced. Who has not known some time or other in their lives those sudden reappearances of long-forgotten thoughts—the return of those waves which we fancied had ebbed and been for ever swallowed up in the great deep, but which heave up again, and bring back with them relics of past joys or dreams of future bliss!

Maitre Simon's barge was lying at anchor near the village. It had just landed a party of emigrants on their way back from the Arkansas to New Orleans. He was storing it with provisions for the rest of the voyage, and was standing in the midst of cases and barrels, busily engaged in this labour, when Colonel d'Auban stepped into the boat, bade him good morning, and inquired after his daughter. On his first arrival in America he had made the voyage up the Mississippi in one of Simon's boats, and the bargeman's little girl, then a child of twelve years of age, was also on board. Simonette inherited from her mother, an Illinois Indian, the dark complexion and peculiar-looking eyes of that race; otherwise she was thoroughly French and like her father, whose native land was Gascony. From her infancy she had been the plaything of the passengers

on his boat, and they were, indeed, greatly in need of amusement during the wearisome weeks when, half imbedded in the floating vegetation of the wide river, they slowly made their way against its mighty current. As she advanced in years, the child became a sort of attendant on the women on board, and rendered them many little services. She was an extraordinary being. Quicksilver seemed to run in her veins. She never remained two minutes together in the same spot or the same position. She swam like a fish and ran like a lapwing. Her favourite amusements were to leap in and out of the boat, to catch hold of the swinging branches of the wild vine, and run up the trunks of trees with the agility of a squirrel, or to sit laughing with her playfellows, the monkeys, gathering bunches of grapes and handfuls of wild cherries for the passengers. She had a wonderful handiness, and a peculiar talent for contrivances. There were very few things Simonette could not do if she once set about them. She twisted ropes of the long grass which grows on the floating islands of the Mississippi, and could build a hut with old boards and pieces of coarse canvas, or prepare a dinner with hardly any materials at all—as far as any one could see. She mended dresses or made them, kept her father's accounts, or, what was more extraordinary still, proved a clever and patient nurse to the passengers who fell ill with the dreadful fever of the country. Wild as an elf, and merry as a sprite at other times, she would then sit quietly by the side of the sufferers, bathing their foreheads or chafing their hands as the hot or cold fit was upon them, and rendering them every kind of service.

During the time that d'Auban was on board her father's boat, it was the little stewardess herself who fell ill. One day her laugh was no longer heard

—the plaything, the bird, the elf, ceased to dart here and there as she was wont to do in the exuberance of her youthful spirits. Nothing had ever before subdued her. She did not know what it was to fear any thing, except perhaps a blow from her father, and, to do him justice, his blows were not hard ones. A bit of European finery or a handful of sweetmeats were enough to send her into an ecstasy. Sometimes she was in a passion, but it did not last beyond a minute or two, and she was laughing again before there had been time to notice that she was out of temper. But now sickness laid its heavy hand on the poor child, her aching head drooped heavily on her breast. She did not care for any thing, and when spoken to scarcely answered. Simon sat by his little daughter, driving away the insects from her face, and trying in his rough way to cheer her. D'Auban also came and sat by her side, and whispered to him, "Has she been baptized?"

"No, I have never had time to take her to a priest."

D'Auban sighed, and Simon looked at him anxiously. Faith was not quite extinct in him, and grief, as it often does, had revived the dying spark.

"May I briefly instruct, and then baptize her?" d'Auban added.

"You! but you are not a priest."

"No, but a layman may baptize a person in danger of death."

The little girl overheard the words, and cried out, "I will not die; don't let me die."

"No, my bird, my little one, you shall not die," Simon answered, weeping and wringing his hands.

"Not unless the good God chooses to take you to His beautiful home in heaven," said d'Auban, kneeling by the side of the child. Then he talked to her in a low and soothing voice, and taught her the few great truths she could understand. Then, showing her

a crucifix, he made her repeat a simple act of contrition, and baptized her in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. As the water flowed on her brow she raised her eyes no longer with a wild elfish smile, but a calm contented look. He made her a Christian that day, and on their arrival at the mission of St. Francis he took her to Father Maret, who, whilst her father's bark was repairing, placed her under Thérèse's care. She was christened in the church, and made her first communion before his next voyage. Thérèse took great pains with her charge, but she did not understand her character. The Indian's grave and earnest soul did not harmonize with the volatile, impulsive, and wayward nature of the Frenchman's child. Simonette heard Mass on Sunday, and said short prayers night and morning, but her piety was of the active order. She studied her catechism up in some tree, seated on a branch, or else swinging in one of the nets in which Indian women rock their children. She could hardly sit still during a sermon, and from sheer restlessness envied the birds as they flew past the windows. But if Father Maret had a message to send across the prairie, or if food and medicine was to be carried to the sick, she was his ready messenger—his carrier-pigeon, as he called her. Through tangled thickets and marshy lands she made her way, fording with her naked feet the tributary streams of the great river, or swimming across them if necessary; jumping over fallen trunks, and singing as she went, the bird-like creature made friends and played with every animal she met, and fed on berries and wild honey.

As she grew older, the life she led, her voyages to and from New Orleans, and above all, the acquaintances she made in that town, were very undesirable for a young girl. She learnt much

of the evil of the world, was often thrown into bad company, listened to conversation and read books well adapted to taint the mind and corrupt the heart. But as yet she had passed through these scenes and been exposed to those trials without much apparent bad result. When she returned to St. François du Sault, her manner was for a while bold and somewhat wild; she said foolish and reckless things. But an interview with Father Maret, a few days spent amongst good people, or a word of friendly advice from her godfather, would set her right again, and cause her to resume her good habits, to soften her voice, and sober her exuberant spirits. She had found a safeguard against contaminating influences in a feeling the nature of which she could scarcely have defined, composed as it was of gratitude, admiration, and a love which had in it no admixture of hope or expectation of return. Sometimes these extraneous helps are permitted to do their work and to assist human weakness to keep its footing amidst life's shoals and quicksands—themselves at best but sands! But if a grain of sand has ever stood between us and sin it is not to be despised: nor will He despise it who caused the gourd to grow over the prophet's head, and to wither away when its mission was fulfilled.

"Where is Simonette?" inquired d'Auban, after the first words of civility had paused between him and the bargeman.

"She was here a minute ago," answered Simon with a grin, "but that is rather a reason she should not be here now. The girl is never in the same place for two minutes together."

"What! have not advancing years at all tamed her?" said d'Auban, laughing. "Is she quite the same light-hearted creature who enlivened for me the horrors of my first acquaint-

ance with your barges, Maitre Simon? Well, I am glad of it. In the midst of mournful-looking Indians and careworn settlers, it is pleasant to have a laughing fairy like your daughter to remind us that there still exists such a thing as mirth. But I wish she was here. I have something to propose to her. However, I may as well, perhaps, broach the subject to you."

"Is it something profitable?" asked Maitre Simon, thrusting his hands in his pockets.

"It is a situation with a lady. You will admit that such an offer is not often to be met with in this country."

"What sort of a situation?"

"Partly as attendant, partly as companion."

"And is the lady a real one?"

"I have no doubt she is."

"And a person of good character? You see, Colonel, I am an old sinner myself, but I should not like my little girl to live with some of the ladies whom we know come out to the colony."

D'Auban felt he had no proof to give of Madame de Moldau's respectability beyond his own entire belief in it.

He answered in a somewhat sneering manner, "I will engage to say that, as far as morality goes, she is greatly superior to the persons your daughter associates with on board your boats."

"Ah! but there I watch over her."

Whatever d'Auban might think of the amount of Simon's parental vigilance, he felt that his own manner of speaking had been wrong.

"All I can tell you is," he said in a different tone, "that from what I have myself seen of Madame de Moldau, I am persuaded that she is a person of unexceptionable character. Her father has more fortune than the generality of settlers, and has bought M. de Harlay's pavillon. I did not know them before they came here but my im-

pressions are so favourable that I do not hesitate to advise you to accept the offer I speak of, if Simonette herself is inclined to do so."

"Here comes the monkey," cried Simon, pointing to the thicket from whence his daughter was emerging. "May I speak to her first about it?" d'Auban asked.

"Certainly; only when you come to talk of wages you better take me into council."

D'Auban went to meet the girl. In her half-French, half-Indian costume, with her black hair twisted in a picturesque manner round her head, and her eyes darting quick glances, more like those of a restless bird than of a woman, Simonette, as Maitre Simon's daughter had always been called, was rather pretty. There was life, animation, and a kind of brilliancy about her, though there was no real beauty in her features, and no repose in her countenance; she seemed always on the point of starting off, and had a way of looking out of the corner of her eye as if she caught at what was said to her rather than listened to it.

"How do you do, Simonette? It is a long time since I have seen you."

"Sir, I thought you had forgotten me."

"No, indeed, I have not; and the proof is in my coming here to-day to offer you a situation."

"Sir, I don't want a situation."

"Hear what it is, Simonette, before you decide. Madame de Moldau, the lady at St. Agathe, would like to engage you as an attendant; but, in fact, what she really wants is a companion."

"Sir, she had better not take me."

"Why so, Simonette?"

"Because, sir, I should not suit her."

"But I think you would, Simonette, and I really wish you would think about it."

"Well, wait a moment, and I will." She darted off, and in a moment was out of sight.

Maitre Simon came up to d'Auban and asked what had become of her.

"She says she must take time to consider, and has rushed into the thickets."

"I always maintain she is more like a monkey than a woman," Simon exclaimed, in a tone of vexation. "I dare say she is in the hollow of a tree or at the top of a branch. I wish she was married and off my hands. What wages would the lady give?"

"Well, forty francs a month, I suppose."

"Fifty would be more to the purpose. You see, sir, if it is not often that ladies are to be found in these parts, it is just as seldom that ladies' maids are to be met with."

"Well, I admit there is something in that. Let us then say fifty."

"Ah! I know you are a reasonable man, Colonel d'Auban. I wish the girl would come back."

In a few minutes she did return, holding a small ape in her arms, and playing a thousand tricks with it.

"Well, Simonette, your father is satisfied about the wages. It remains for you to say if you will accept the situation."

"No, sir, I will not," answered Simonette, looking hard into the monkey's face.

"But it is a very good offer," urged her father. "Fifty francs a month. What are you thinking of, child?"

"It would also be an act of charity towards the lady," d'Auban put in. "She is ill and sorrowful."

"And I am sure it would be a charity to ourselves," Simon said, in a whispering voice. "Passengers are not so frequent as they used to be, and it is like turning our backs on Providence to refuse an honest employment."

"It is the lady we brought some months ago, father, from New Orleans," said Simonette. "A pale, tall woman, with blue eyes."

"Of course, I remember her quite well. The old gentleman paid my bill without saying a word, which very few of my passengers have the right feeling to do. I am sure they must be excellent people."

There was a slight sneer on his daughter's lip.

"What does this lady expect of me, sir?" she said, turning to d'Auban.

"To help her to govern her household, and render all the little services you can. She is much inclined to like you, and I think you would be very happy at St. Agathe."

Simonette laughed a short bitter laugh, and, hugging the monkey, whispered in its ear, "Oh, my good little ape! Are you not glad to see how foolish men can be?" Then, suddenly becoming grave, she looked steadily at d'Auban and said, "Then, sir, you really wish me to accept the offer?"

"I really do. I think it will be a mutual advantage to this lady and to you."

"Then, God forgive me, I will."

"God forgive you!" exclaimed d'Auban, puzzled, and beginning to feel irritated with the girl's manner. "What can you mean?"

"She is in one of her moods; it is the Indian blood in her," cried Maitre Simon. "But you know, Colonel, she soon gets out of these queer tempers; she is a good girl on the whole. May we consider the affair as settled?"

"I suppose so," said d'Auban, speaking rather coldly. "If you will come to-morrow at nine o'clock to St. Agathe, Simonette, Madame de Moldau will see you."

"Very well, sir. Have you any other commands for me?"

"No, only to catch and tame for me just such another ape as that."

"They are not easily tamed. They require a great deal of affection."

"Oh! that I cannot promise to give to a monkey."

"The love of a little animal is not to be always despised," muttered Simonette, "nor its hatred;" and then she went about the barge pulling things about and exciting the ape to grin and to chatter. When d'Auban and her father had gone away, she sat down on one of the benches and began to cry. "Oh, bad spirit!" she exclaimed—"fierce spirit of my mother's race, go out of my heart. Let the other spirit return—the dancing, laughing, singing spirit. Oh, that the Christian spirit that took charge of me when I was baptized would drive them both away—I am so tired of their fighting!"

Just then Thérèse came near the

boat and said, "Simonette, all the girls of the mission assemble to-day in the church to renew their baptismal vows, and the chief of prayer will speak to them. The altar is lighted up, and the children are bringing flowers. Will you come?"

Simonette was soon with her companions in the forest chapel, and after the service was over she played with them on the green sward under the tulip trees. The maiden of seventeen summers was as wild with spirits, as turbulent in her glee, as the youngest of the party. She stopped once in the midst of a dance to whisper to Thérèse—"The Indian spirit is gone out of my heart for the present, but as to the French one, if I drive it out at the door it comes back by the window. What is to be done?"

CHAPTER V.

Strive; yet I do not promise
 The prize you dream of to-day
 Will not fade when you think to grasp it,
 And melt in your hand away.
 Pray, though the gift you ask for
 May never comfort your fears,
 May never repay your pleading,
 Yet pray, and with hopeful tears;
 And far through the misty future,
 With a crown of starry light,
 An hour of joy you know not
 Is winging her silent flight. *Adelaide Proctor.*

Rumour is a pipe blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures.

Shakespeare.

On the following morning Colonel d'Auban met Simonette in the avenue of the pavillon. M. de Chambelle was coming out of the house with a very disconsolate countenance. He brightened up a little when he saw d'Auban.

"I do not know what is to become of us," he said. "Madame de Moldau is quite ill, and the Indian servant does

not know how to do any thing. Mom Dieu! what a country this is! Why would she come here?"

"I have brought Maître Simon's daughter, M. de Chambelle. She wishes to offer her services to Madame de Moldau."

"Ah! Mademoiselle Simonette, you are a messenger from heaven!"

The celestial visitant was looking at poor M. de Chambelle with an expression which had in it a little too much *malice* to be quite angelic. "Let Mademoiselle," he continued, "name her own terms." It was fortunate that Simon was not there to hear this, and d'Auban mentioned the sum agreed upon between them. M. de Chambelle gladly assented, and said he would go and inform his daughter of Mademoiselle's arrival. "I beg you will be seated," he said, bowing to the young quadron with as much ceremony as if she had been a princess in disguise.

With equal formality he announced to his daughter that he had found her an attendant in the little stewardess on board the Frenchman's barge.

"Do you mean his daughter?" she asked—"the girl with eyes as black as the berries she gathered for us?"

"Yes, Madame, the young person who sometimes used to make you laugh."

"You know, my dear father, we had resolved not to have European servants. I feel as if it would be running a risk."

"But this girl is a quadron. She has never been in Europe. She is really half a savage."

"On the contrary, my good father, she is a very civilized little being—far too much so for us. Indeed, I had rather not take her into the house."

"But I cannot bear any longer, and that is the real truth, to see you without any of the comforts you ought to have. . . Oh yes, I know the walls are thin. I will not speak too loud. But did I not find you yesterday kneeling on the floor, trying to make the fire burn, and that horrible squaw standing stupidly by?"

"It is not the poor creature's fault; she is willing to learn."

"And in the mean time you, you, my own—"

The old man burst into tears, and

leant against the foot of the bed overpowered with grief. "If you knew what I suffer when I see you thus!"

"Poor old father! do not grieve. There have been times when I have suffered much more than I do now. And let this thought be a comfort to you. What should I have done but for your care? I sometimes, however, ask myself if it was worth while to go through so much in order to lead such a life as this. If it would not have been better—" She hid her face in her hands and shuddered. "No, no, I am not ungrateful. But do not take it unkindly, dear good father, if I talk to you so little. I often feel like a wounded animal who cares for nothing but to lie down exhausted. I remember—ah! I had resolved never to use that word again—but I do remember seeing a stricken deer lying on the grass, in a green valley near the tower where the hounds used so often to meet. It was panting and bleeding. I could not help weeping, even as you are now weeping. Dear old father! try not to give way to grief. It only makes me sad. Settle as you think best about this French or Indian girl. Does Colonel d'Auban recommend us to take her?"

"Most strongly. He is sure you will find her useful. He feels as I do; he cannot bear to see you without proper attendance."

"You have not told him?"

"Heaven forbid! but anybody would be sorry to see you so ill and with no one to nurse you."

"Well, let her come. I have not energy enough to resist yours and his kind wishes. The future must take its chance. But before you go, look up that book, if you please."

This was the volume of German Psalms which had been snatched out of d'Auban's hand on the day of his first visit.

There was an undefinable expression in Simonette's face when she came into Madame de Moldau's room—an uneasy suspicious look. She answered briefly the questions put to her, and seemed relieved when her active exertions were called into play. She had not been many hours in the house before it assumed a new aspect. Some people have a natural talent for making others comfortable, and relieving the many little sources of disquietude which affect invalids.

Madame de Moldau's couch was soon furnished with cushions made of the dried willow grass, which the Indians collect for a similar purpose. The want of blinds or shutters was supplied by boughs, ingeniously interwoven and fixed against the windows. The sunbeams could not pierce through the soft green of these verdant curtains. The kitchen was put on a new footing, and towards evening a French *consommé* was brought to Madame de Moldau, such as she had not tasted since her arrival in America.

"I could not have believed a basin of broth could ever have been so acceptable," she said with a kind smile when her new attendant came to fetch the cup away.

Simonette made no answer. Her manner to her mistress was by no means agreeable; she laboured indefatigably for her, but the gaiety which had been her principal attraction only showed itself now by fits and starts. She soon became the ruling power at St. Agathe; took all trouble off M. de Chambelle's hands, and managed him as a child. The Indian servant, the negro boy, and even the slaves on the plantation, owned her sway. After she had been at the pavillon about three weeks, D'Auban met her and said, "Your employers are delighted with you, Simonette."

"They would do better to send me away, sir," she testily replied.

"Why so?" he asked, feeling hurt and disappointed.

"Sir, I do not like people who have secrets."

"What do you mean?"

Before she could answer M. de Chambelle joined them, and she went away. The recklessness of her childhood, and the exuberance of her animal spirits, had now taken the form of incessant activity. She never seemed happy except when hard at work.

D'Auban's visits to St. Agathe were becoming more and more frequent. There were few evenings he did not end his rounds by spending a few moments under the verandah or in the parlour of the pavillon. Most of his books, and all his flowers, gradually made their way there. Antoine, though little given to reading himself, bitterly complained that there was scarcely a volume left on his master's shelves. He began to feel at home in that little room, to which Simonette had contrived to impart an Old World look of comfort. Her glimpses of the colonists' houses at New Orleans had given her an insight into European habits. His chair was placed for him between Madame de Moldau and her father, and, though she was habitually silent, the hours glided by with wonderful rapidity during the now lengthening evenings, as he recounted the little incidents of the day, or described the scenery he had rode through, or dwelt on the new plans he was forming. She always listened with interest to every thing he said, but did not seem to care much about the people amongst whom their lot was cast. The mention of any kind of suffering always made her shudder, but that negroes, Indians, or poor people of any sort were of the same nature as herself, she did not seem exactly to realize. Practically, she did not care much more about them than for the birds and beasts,

living and dying around her in the sunshine and the shade. But d'Auban, by telling her facts which came home to her woman's heart, gradually awoke in her a new sense of sympathy. It was dangerous ground, however, to venture on, for if the woes of others did not always appear to touch her deeply, yet sometimes the mention of them provoked a burst of feeling which shook her delicate frame almost to pieces. M. de Chambelle on these occasions was wont to look at him reproachfully, and at her with a distressed expression till she had recovered her composure. D'Auban also got into the habit of watching every turn of her countenance, every tone of her voice. She attracted and she puzzled him. Not only did her father, and she herself, continue to preserve a nearly total silence as to their past history, but there were peculiarities in her character he did not understand. It was impossible in many ways to be more amiable, to show a sweeter disposition, or bear with more courage the privations and discomforts she was often subjected to. But he could not help observing that, notwithstanding all her sweetness and amiability, she took it as a matter of course that her wishes should be considered paramount to any other consideration. She acknowledged Simonette's services with kindness, but made ample, and not always very considerate, use of them. He was often sent for himself at inconvenient times, and for somewhat trifling reasons, and she did not seem to understand that the requirements of business were imperious, and could not be postponed to suit her convenience. But he was so glad to see her shake off the listless despondency which had weighed upon her during the first period of her residence at St. Agathe, so delighted to hear her express any wish and take pleasure in any thing; the least word

of thanks from her had such a charm for him, and ministering to her happiness was becoming so absorbing an interest, that, even whilst wondering at M. de Chambelle's paternal infatuation, he was fast treading in his footsteps, and in danger of being himself subjected to the same gentle tyranny. Their conversations grew longer and more intimate. He felt he was gaining influence over her. Often when he was expressing his opinions on various subjects, she would say:

"I had never thought of that before;" or, "it had never struck me in that light." And he would notice the result of some observation he had made in slight changes in her conduct.

There was one subject, however, she always carefully avoided, and that was religion. He was in total ignorance as to her feelings and opinions on that point. Except the volume of German Psalms which had been taken out of his hand, he had seen nothing at St. Agathe which gave him any idea as to the form of religion she professed, or whether she held any religious belief at all. At last he resolved to break silence on this subject by putting a direct question to her.

This happened one evening when he had been speaking of the slaves, and of the measures he was taking for their instruction in Christianity. He abruptly asked, "What is your religion, Madame de Moldau?"

The silence which ensued was painful to both. His heart was beating very fast, and an expression of annoyance almost amounting to displeasure was visible in her face. At last, as he seemed to persist in expecting an answer, she said, "I think I should be justified in refusing to answer that question. There are subjects on which, in such a country as this at least, thought may be free. I would rather not be questioned as to my religious belief."

"Forgive me, Madame de Moldau, but is this a friendly answer? Do you think it is curiosity leads me to ask? Do you think, as day after day we have sat talking of every thing except religion; that I have not longed to know what you thought—what you believed? . . . No, I will not let you be silent. I will not leave you till you have answered my question."

There was in d'Auban's character the strength of will which gives some persons a natural ascendancy over others. Other qualities may contribute to it, but determination is the natural element of all such power. It has also been said that in any friendship or intimacy between two persons, there comes a moment which establishes the ascendancy of one of the parties over the other; and if this be true, that moment was arrived for those we are now speaking of. Madame de Moldau had resolved not to open her lips on the subject which he was equally determined she should speak upon. She wept and made signs that he should leave her; but he who had been hitherto subservient to her slightest wish, who had treated her with an almost exaggerated deference, now stood firm to his point. He sat resolutely on with his lips compressed, his dark gray eyes fixed upon her, and his whole soul bent on obtaining the answer which he hoped would break down the wall of silent misery rising between her soul and the consolations she so much needed.

"Madame de Moldau, what religion do you *profess*?" he again asked, laying a stress on the last word.

"I profess none," she answered in a voice stifled with sobs.

"Well, then, thank God that you have said so—that you have had the courage to avow the truth. If you would only open your heart—"

"Open my heart!" she repeated,

with a melancholy emphasis. "You do not know what you are saying; I am not like other people."

"But will you not tell me, Madame, in what religion you were educated?"

A bitter expression passed over her face as she answered:

"In no particular religion."

"Is this possible?"

"I was always told it did not signify what people believed, and, God knows, I think so now."

"Madame, is that your creed?"

"I detest all creeds."

"And have you never practised any religion?"

"I have gone through certain forms."

"Those of the Catholic religion?"

Madame de Moldau was silent.

"For heaven's sake, Madame, answer that one question."

"No, I have never been a Catholic."

"Oh, I am so glad!"

"Why so?"

"You will not understand it now, Madame, but some day you will. And now, before I go, do tell me that I have not offended you."

"I ought, perhaps, to be offended, but in truth I cannot say that I am. Perhaps it is because I cannot afford to quarrel with the only friend I have in the world." She held out her hand, and for the first time he pressed it to his lips.

"And I suppose I am to read these books?" she said, with a faint smile, pointing to the last volumes he had sent. "I doubt not they are carefully chosen."

"There was not much to choose from in my library, and no art in the selection. I have sent you the friends which have strengthened me in temptation, consoled me in sorrow, and guided me through life."

As he was leaving Madame de Moldau's room, d'Auban perceived through the green leaves two eyes fixed upon

them. He wondered who it was watching them, and darted out to see. Simonette was sitting at work in the verandah, humming the old French song :

Au clair de la lune,
Mon ami Pierrot,
Prête-moi ta plume,
Pour écrire un mot.

"Who was looking into that room?" he said, going up to her in an angry manner.

She shrugged her shoulders without answering. He felt convinced it must have been her eyes he had seen through the green boughs, but thought it better not to say so.

"Do you like your situation, Simonette?" he asked.

"No, sir, I do not."

"Are you not well treated?"

"I have nothing to complain of."

"What makes you dislike it, then?"

"Nothing that anybody can help."

"Come, Simonette, I am an old friend of yours. You ought to speak to me with more confidence."

"A friend to me! yes, you have indeed been the best of friends to a friendless girl; but, sir, it was not a friendly act to bring me here."

"I wish you would speak plainly."

"That is just what I cannot do."

"You are not used to service, and find it irksome, I suppose?"

"No, I have always served some one or other since I can recollect."

"Your mistress seems particularly kind to you, and I know both she and her father are greatly pleased with your services."

"And it gives you pleasure that I should stay here?"

This was said in a gentler tone of voice.

"Well, I should be glad that you remained, and I cannot see any reason against it."

"Then, sir, I will try to do so," she

answered, in a humble, submissive manner. "Good-bye, M. d'Auban."

When he was gone, the young girl sank down again on the seat, and for a moment covered her face with her hands. When she took up her work again, and as her eyes wandered over the lawn, they caught sight of something yellow and glittering lying on the grass, at a short distance from the house. She went to pick it up, and found a magnificent gold locket, which contained a miniature set in diamonds. She held it open on the palm of her hand, and gazed alternately at the picture and on the words inscribed at the back. An expression of surprise, a sort of suppressed exclamation, rose from her compressed lips; then putting it in her pocket, she walked back to the house—not in her usual darting bird-like fashion, but slowly, like a person whose mind is wholly absorbed. Madame de Moldau had been asking for her, and when she came in complained a little of her absence; but, observing that she looked ill, kindly inquired if she was ailing.

"You work too hard, perhaps. I really do not think you ever take a moment's rest. I reproach myself for not having noticed it before."

"Indeed, you need not do so, lady, for it is not for your sake that I came here, and if I do spend my strength in working for you, neither is it for your sake that I do so."

Madame de Moldau coloured a little, for there was something offensive in the tone with which she was said.

"Do you mean," she asked with a slight amount of irony, "that it is all for the love of God, as pious people say?"

"No, Madame; Thérèse works in that way, and I wish with all my heart I did so too. She has no master but the good God."

"And for whom do you work, then?

Who do you call your master? Is it the priest, or your own father?"

"I am not speaking of them, Madame."

"Then of whom are you speaking?"

"May not I have my secrets, Madame, as you have yours?"

Madame de Moldau coloured deeply, and put her hand to her heart as if to still its throbbings.

"Call M. de Chambelle," she faintly said.

"He is gone out, Madame, with M. d'Auban. I saw them crossing the stream a moment ago."

Madame de Moldau sighed deeply, and joined her hands together in an attitude of forced endurance. Simonette was looking at her with a searching glance. One of her hands was in her pocket tightly grasping the locket she had found. At last she said:

"Lady, have you lost any thing?"

Madame de Moldau hurriedly felt for the black ribbon round her neck, and not finding it there, turned pale.

"What have you found?" she asked.

"A very beautiful trinket," Simonette answered, and pulled the locket out of her pocket. "Of course it belongs to you, Madame? Those are larger diamonds than any I have yet seen, but I learnt at New Orleans the value of those kind of things."

Madame de Moldau held out her hand for the locket. "Thank you," she quickly said. "It is my property." Then she took off a small ring and offered it to her attendant. "This is not a reward for your honesty, for I am sure you do not wish for one, but rather a token of the pleasure it gives me to recover this locket."

Simonette hesitated. On the one hand the thought crossed her mind, that the offer of the ring was a bribe. She thought she had grounds for thinking this possible. The conflict which had been going on in her mind since

her coming to St. Agathe seemed to have reached a crisis. "I am much obliged to you, Madame," she said at last, "but I would rather not accept this ring."

A long silence ensued. Both took up some needlework. The hands of the mistress trembled, whilst her attendant's fingers moved with nervous rapidity. After a long silence the former said, "You have been a kind and a useful attendant, Simonette, and I do not know what I should have done without you during my illness; but I am now quite recovered. You do not seem to be happy here, and I ought to learn to wait on myself. Is it not better that we should part?"

Again good and bad thoughts of that gentle lady passed like lightning through the girl's mind. "She wishes to get rid of me. She knows I suspect her. Perhaps I am an obstacle to some of her wicked plans." The indignant inward voice was answered by another. "It is cruel to suspect her. Cruel to leave her. She will be ill again if I go. At the bottom of my heart I believe I love her."

She raised her eyes, which she had hitherto kept fixed on her work. Madame de Moldau was weeping; she looked the very picture of youthful and touching sorrow—so innocent, so gentle, so helpless. Their eyes met, and Simonette's were also full of tears. "Would you be sorry to leave me, Simonette?"

"M. d'Auban will be very angry with me if I do."

"Not if I chose to part with you?"

This was said with gentleness but firmness.

Simonette felt her conduct was ungenerous, and she exclaimed, "I have been wrong; do let me stay, Madame. I cannot bear that M. d'Auban should think me ungrateful."

"What has he done to inspire you with so much gratitude?"

"What has he *not* done for me?" Simonette replied, with deep emotion. "I was an outcast and he reclaimed me—a savage and he instructed me—I was dying, and he baptized me!"

"Indeed! When?—where?"

"Five years ago in my father's boat. I had the fever. I shall never forget the words he said to me then, or what I felt when he poured the water on my head."

"And he has been kind to you ever since?"

"Oh yes, very kind; he is always kind."

"He has, indeed, been so to us."

"May I stay?"

"I don't know, Simonette; M. de Chambelle will decide."

"Then I am sure I shall stay."

This was said in a tone which, in the midst of her emotion, which had not yet subsided, made Madame de Moldau laugh. That laugh settled the question. But although Simonette's heart had been touched, her mind was not satisfied. The sight of the locket and of the picture it contained stood between her and her peace. She took advice of Father Maret. He, probably, was of opinion that she should stay at St. Agathe, for she said nothing more about leaving; but though she grew every day fonder of her mistress, it was clear that some secret anxiety was preying on her mind.

After this day nothing occurred for some time to disturb the even course of the settlers' lives. D'Auban now spent all his spare time at St. Agathe, and Madame de Moldau gradually began to take an interest in his pursuits and occupations. The united concessions were flourishing under his management, and the condition of the labourers rapidly improving. At last she was induced to visit some of the

nuts on the plantation, and as soon as the effort was made, she found pleasure in doing good to her poor neighbours and in studying how to help them—first, by furnishing them with little comforts such as they could appreciate, and then by nursing them in sickness. But when it came to this she felt her own helplessness in cases where persons were troubled in mind, or leading bad lives, or plunged in ignorance. Her own ideas were too vague, her own belief too uncertain, to enable her to give advice or consolation to others. One day she found Thérèse in a cabin where a Frenchman was lying at the point of death. She had spoken to her two or three times before, and d'Auban had been anxious to make them better acquainted, but they were both very reserved, and no advance had been made towards intimacy. Wishing not to disturb her she remained near the door, and did not make her presence known. Thérèse was speaking earnestly to the sick man and preparing him for the last sacrament, which Father Maret was soon to bring him. What she said, simple as it was, indeed, because of its simplicity, made a great impression on Madame de Moldau. It gave her different ideas about religion than she had hitherto had. She remained in that poor hut watching, for the first time in her life, the approach of death, and with all sorts of new thoughts crowding into her mind. She placed on the floor the provisions she had brought with her, and slipped away unperceived; but the next day Thérèse was surprised by a visit from the lady of St. Agathe, and still more so by her saying, "Thérèse, you must instruct me in your religion."

A thrill of joy ran through the Indian's heart, but she answered, "Not so, daughter of the white man. Let me take you to the black robe."

"Not yet, Thérèse, not yet. You

must teach me yourself, and then perhaps I will go to the black robe."

"But the eagle of your tribe—he can tell you more than a poor Indian about the Great Spirit and the Christian's prayer."

"Are you speaking of Colonel d'Auban, Thérèse?"

"Yes, of the great and good chief of the white men. They call him amongst us the great hunter and the strong arm, but it is his goodness makes him a son of the Great Spirit, and the hope of all who suffer."

"It is his goodness which began to make me think of learning your religion, Thérèse; but it is you who must teach me."

She would take no denial. Day after day the European lady sat by the side of the daughter of an Algonquin chief in her poor hut, and learnt from her lips the lessons taught from the time of the Apostles by simple and learned men, by poor monks and great divines, in universities and village schools, in the cathedrals of Old Europe and the forest chapels of the New World. She drank in the spirit of child-like piety which breathed in all that Thérèse did and said, and never felt so peaceful as in her cottage. There no questions were raised which could agitate her, no allusions were made to the past, no anxious looks were bent upon her. D'Auban's affection, as well as Simonette's curiosity, were ever on the watch. They were all more or less watching one another. She was not ungrateful for his solicitude, but it sometimes seemed to weary her. There was a struggle going on between them, and also, perhaps, in her own heart. He was always trying to break through the barrier which, with all her feeble womanly strength, she was resolutely keeping closed.

Thérèse, on the contrary, cared nothing for her past history, had no wish

to know who she was and whence she came. Her only object was to make her love the Christian prayer and serve the Great Spirit with as much zeal as herself. This simple and ardent faith, joined to the daily example of her holy life, had more effect on her disciple than able arguments or deep reasonings. The books she had lately read at d'Auban's request had doubtless removed some prejudices from her mind and prepared the way for the reception of dogmatic truth; but it was not Bossuet's writings, nor St. François de Sale's, the most persuasive of Christian writers, that finally overcame her scepticism and converted her to Catholicism. When she heard the young Indian girl speaking of the honour and joy of dying for one's faith, and envying the terrible sufferings which some of her countrymen had not long ago endured for the sake of their religion, it served to convince her far more than abstract reasonings that a creed is not a mere symbol or religion a set of particular ceremonies. She saw in Thérèse how a young person can sacrifice for the love of God every thing that is commonly called happiness and pleasure; and that, amidst the untutored savages of the New World, as well as formerly amongst the proud and luxurious Roman nobles, Christians lay down their lives gladly for the sake of their faith—and this more than any thing else showed her the difference between an opinion and a creed, a sentiment and a religion. Though she did not converse with freedom on these subjects with d'Auban, she liked to hear from Thérèse of his love of the poor, of his tenderness towards the sick and aged. She knew that priests and sisters of charity cared for the poor, but that a man in the prime of life, full of ability and talent, should cherish the outcasts of the human race—savages and slaves—was first a wonder and then a new light to her.

Thérèse's imagination, fraught with imagery and tinged with enthusiasm, drew pictures of his goodness which had in them truth as well as beauty. She described how the white man, who could hunt and swim and slay the leopard and the wolf, and conquer in battle the greatest warriors of the four nations, loved little children and carried them in his arms. She said he was like the west wind walking lightly over the prairies, whispering to the lilies.

Madame de Moldau listened, and her blue eyes, which seemed often fixed in mournful contemplation on invisible scenes of sorrow, would suddenly light up as if a brighter vision rose before them. She was at last persuaded one evening to attend a service in the church of the Mission. It was one of those at which the negroes from the neighbouring plantations usually flocked. Hidden in a recess, she heard the black robe preach to the poor slaves. He spoke of the weary and heavy laden, of a bondage sadder than theirs; and it seemed as if he was addressing her. Perhaps he was, for often God's servants unconsciously utter words which are a direct message from Him to some particular soul. The next day she came to see him, and after that they often met in the huts of the poor, and he sometimes came to St. Agathe. He, too, watched her with interest. How could it be otherwise? D'Auban's affection for the beautiful stranger was no secret to him, and for his sake he tried to become better acquainted with her, to find out something of her past life, of her former associates, of her former place of residence. It was of no use. He was not more successful than d'Auban himself, or than Simonette. He did not express any suspicions, and yet he did not seem perfectly satisfied. He still advised him to be cautious.

"She looks so good! she is so good!" d'Auban would say.

"Well, so she does," he would answer with a smile, "and I hope she is so; but I wish she would tell us where she was born, and where and when M. de Moldau died. I have a fancy for facts and dates, baptismal and marriage certificates."

Some months elapsed, and brought with them little outward change in the lives of the little band of emigrants. It was a monotonous existence, as far as the surface of things went; but it had its under-current of cares and interests, of hopes and fears.

"Men must work and women must weep"—such is the burthen of a popular song which has often been sung in luxurious drawing-rooms by men who do not work and women who seldom weep. But it was true of those dwellers in the wilderness whom chance had brought together, and who were beginning to care more for one another than those should do who are not looking forward to a time when, before God and men, they may be all in all to each other. She often wept; sometimes with passionate grief, or, if others showed her affection, with a kind of child-like sorrow which shows a latent disposition to be comforted.

He worked very hard for her and for others also, for his was not a narrow selfish love. It widened his heart to all human sympathies. Perhaps there was a little self-interest in it too. To every person whose passage to the grave he smoothed, and who whispered with their last breath, "I will pray for you in heaven," he said, "Pray for her." To those who blest him for his kindness or his charity, he again said, "Ask God to bless her." And the blessing he desired for that beloved one was the gift of Faith. He thought he saw its dawning, and watched its progress with anxious hope. The winter came,

and stillness was on the prairie—the stillness which is like that of a mist lying on a waveless sea. The snow was on the ground, the last brown and yellow leaves falling from the scared branches, and the mighty rushing of the neighbouring river, the only sound heard in the depths of the windless forest.

It was a picturesque group which sat round the blazing pine logs in the hall of the pavillon. Madame de Moldau was the centre of it. What a clever French girl said of a princess of our day might have applied to the lady of St. Agathe—“*C'est la réalité de l'idéal.*” Simonette's dark arch countenance, d'Auban's handsome sunburnt face, and M. de Chambelle's gray hairs, contrasted with her fair and radiant beauty. As a background to the principal figures of this picture sat Indian women nursing their children—men mending nets or feathering arrows. Negroes and whites and red men mixed together, crouching by the fire and enjoying the warmth. They were all devoted to Madame de Moldau since she had begun to take notice of them, and she liked them to come in and to surround her. As her spirits improved, she lost her love of solitude, and the homage of her dependants was evidently agreeable to her. She now seldom saw d'Auban in the morning, but was evidently not well pleased if he omitted to come in the evening. She avoided long or intimate conversations with him, but always listened with the greatest attention to what he said to others or in general conversation. None could see them together without perceiving that he was becoming devotedly attached to her—no one, at least, who felt any interest in watching the progress of this attachment. M. de Chambelle evidently rejoiced that he had found in him a fellow-worshipper, and the dark-eyed girl

sitting at her feet knew perfectly well that every word Madame de Moldau uttered thrilled through Colonel d'Auban's heart. She knew also that her mistress watched for the sound of his footfall on the grass just as she did herself, and that when he was in the room there was a brightness in her face which passed away when he left it.

It was a singular bond of union between persons so different from each other, and in such different positions; that they should be interested in the same person, though in a very dissimilar way. This sympathy was felt, though not acknowledged. If d'Auban wished something done, both were eager to carry out his plans. If he stayed away longer than usual from St. Agathe, both were depressed, and each knew what the other was thinking of. The grateful enthusiastic girl's affection was a kind of worship. The reserved and sensitive woman's regard—the highly-educated lady's feelings—were of a different nature. This was often evinced in the little daily occurrences of life. Once, when he was ill, Madame de Moldau would not believe that he was too ill to come to St. Agathe. Simonette turned pale at the thought of his doing so, for Father Maret had said it would be imprudent. Yet on another occasion, when a man was drowning, she was glad he plunged into the river to save him at the risk of his life, whilst Madame de Moldau entreated and commanded him to desist from the attempt. To see him honoured, admired, and beloved, was the passion of the young quadroom—to be cherished and cared for and petted by him, Madame de Moldau's principal object.

There was as much variety in the subjects talked of in those evenings at St. Agathe as in the appearance of the persons gathered together in that remote spot from the most opposite parts

of the world. Tales were told and songs were sung which had called forth tears and smiles under other skies and amidst other scenes. Stories of the black forest and the Hartz mountains; legends of Brittany and of the bocage; traditions of the salt lakes and the fenlands—of Africa tribes and slavery in Brazil—were told in prose and verse, wild and rude at times, but now and then full of the poetry which belongs to the infancy of nations. Father Maret was one day relating that a Frenchman had escaped death by promising the savages, if they would spare his life, that he would prove to them that he held them all in his heart—a pledge he redeemed by discovering a looking glass which he wore on his breast. There was a general laugh, and from Madame de Moldau's lips it came sweetly ringing like the chirping of a bird in a hedgerow. D'Auban had never heard her laugh; M. de Chambelle not for a very long time. Their eyes met, and there was a silent congratulation in that glance. The laugh which had gladdened their hearts was like the first note of the cuckoo on a spring-day, telling of green shoots and budding blossoms at hand.

On the same evening, when Father Maret was going away, Madame de Moldau followed him to the door, and said a few words to him. When she returned there was a very pensive expression in her countenance. Simonette was distributing some maple sugar to the labourers about to depart. They were as fond of it as children. M. de Chambelle was dozing. There was still some heat in the red embers, though the fire had nearly burnt out. Madame de Moldau stood by the chimney gazing on the fantastic shapes of the gleaming ashes. D'Auban said to her:

"I am so glad, madame, that you like Father Maret and see him often."

She sighed deeply. "How could one know and not like him, and not admire him? But . . ."

"But what?"

"He is very severe."

"In what way?"

Madame de Moldau coloured, and did not answer.

"Oh, that silence! that perpetual silence. Will you never have the least confidence in me. Do not you see, do you not feel how devotedly . . .?" he was going to say, "I love you," but he was checked by a look, in which there was perhaps a little haughtiness. At least he fancied he saw something like pride in the sudden drawing up of her swan-like neck, and the troubled expression of her eyes; but if so, it lasted but an instant. In an earnest feeling manner she said, "If we are to be friends, dear M. d'Auban, and we certainly must be friends, and continue so, abstain, I beseech you, from appeals and reproaches, which give me more pain than you can imagine. I know how trying my silence must often be to you; how often I must appear cold and ungrateful . . ."

"No, no, indeed it is not that. On the contrary, it is your kindness which emboldened me to speak as I did just now."

"One thing I will tell you which you will be glad to hear. I am thinking of becoming a Catholic."

"Thank God for it," he exclaimed. "Madame, I have prayed and hoped for this ever since I have known you."

"Have you indeed prayed for it? You do not know what it may involve," her voice faltered a little.

"Sacrifices, perhaps?" he gently said, and paused, hoping she would say more. But just then M. de Chambelle woke up and made a thousand apologies for his drowsiness. She seemed glad of the interruption, and d'Auban went away.

As he walked home, he turned over

in his mind every thing that had passed during the last eighteen months since Madame de Moldau's arrival. That lapse of time had not thrown any light on the points which from the first had puzzled him. A mystery is never a pleasant thing—seldom a blessed one. The trackless wilds of the New World had already been polluted by many a foot which had set its impress on the worn-out surface of the Old World in characters of blood. Many had brought with them ill-gotten gains wherewith to traffic amidst new scenes and new dupes. How many, also, to hide a name once held up to public disgrace, and begin a new life, not of penitence and atonement, but of artifice and sin. He had never for a single moment supposed it possible that Madame de Moldau belonged to any of these classes of emigrants. She was one of those beings, so he fancied at least, with whom it is impossible to couple a thought of suspicion. He would sooner have doubted the evidence of his senses than have deemed her guilty and deceitful. But it did not seem equally out of the question that she might be the involuntary accomplice, or rather the victim of the sins of others. Nothing could exceed the precautions taken by her and her father to conceal even the outside of the letters they received. M. de Chambelle always watched for the arrival of the boat, and fetched away himself the parcels and letters directed to them. He had also noticed that she always looked nervous when he brought a newspaper with him. The arrival of one was rather an event in the settlement, and he sometimes offered to read the contents aloud. On one occasion, when he was doing so, he happened to look up and perceived that Madame de Moldau seemed very much moved,

and caught sight of Simonette's eyes fixed upon her with a scrutinizing expression. He made some slight comments on the various topics alluded to in the number of the *Mercur de France*, which he had just read; but his observations elicited no answers. Mention had been made in it of the war in Germany; of Madame de Maintenon's death; of the illness of Louis XV.; of a fresh conspiracy against Peter the Great, and his son's flight from Russia; of the coronation of George I.; a great conflagration at Brussels, and a murder at Prague. He took the paper home with him. Simonette called early the next morning and begged the loan of it for her mistress.

"I was sure," she said, "that madame would ask to see it again; there is something in it which I know would particularly interest her."

D'Auban felt greatly tempted to ask what it was she alluded to. Simonette had often of late showed a desire to talk to him of her mistress, especially in reference to the mystery in which her past life was shrouded; but he had always checked her. He had been the means of placing this girl with Madame de Moldau, and he would not on any account have availed himself of any information she might have acquired in order to discover her mistress's secrets. Seeing he made no reply to her observation, Simonette took the paper and went away.

All these circumstances made him anxious and thoughtful; one thing, however, gave him comfort. She who had been apparently drifting on life's sea like a rudderless bark, was now about to enter the haven. A prudent and tender hand would soon probe the wound so long and sedulously concealed. Hope and blessings were in that thought.

CHAPTER VI

I thought to pass away before,
 And yet alive I am
 A still small voice spake unto me
 Thou art so full of misery:
 Were it not better not to be?
 A second voice was at my ear,
 A little whisper silver clear,
 A murmur "be of better cheer."
 So heavenly toned that in that hour
 From out my sullen heart a power,
 Broke like the rainbow from the shower.

Tennyson.

But a more celestial brightness, a more ethereal beauty
 Shone on her face and encircled her form when, after confession,
 Homeward serenely she walked with God's benediction upon her.
 When she had passed it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music.

Longfellow.

A FEW days later d'Auban met Madame de Moldau coming out of the church of the mission. He saw her before she could see him. She seemed to be gazing with admiration on the scene before her. It was an afternoon of wintry but exquisite beauty. No transparent vapour, no mist laden with dew obscured the grand outlines or dimmed the delicate features of nature. The distant hills and the smallest blade of grass stood out in beautiful distinctness in the brilliancy of the sunshine. But as he drew near, and she still remained motionless and absorbed in contemplation, he felt that it was not the beauty of earth and sky that was filling her soul with ecstasy—not the brilliancy of the cloudless heavens which riveted her upward gaze. He guessed, and rightly guessed, that she had that day laid at the foot of the cross the burthen so long borne in silence; that the poisoned arrow had been drawn from her breast. He was deeply moved; for he loved the woman who midway in his life had come to

sadden by her silent sorrow, and yet to cheer by her gentle companionship, the loneliness of his exile. He longed to hear her say that she was one with him in faith, that henceforward they would worship at the same altar, that one great barrier between them was for ever removed. He spoke to her in a loud voice; she turned round and held out her hand to him.

"Yes," she said, in answer to his question, "it is as you suppose. I am at Catholic."

For the first time since his mother had been laid in her quiet grave in the little churchyard of St. Anne, d'Auray, tears rose in his eyes.

"Blessed be this hour and this day," he murmured, with uncontrollable emotion. "It has made us one in faith. May not our hearts and our lives be also for ever united! Madame de Moldau, will you be my wife?"

The moment he had uttered the words he would have wished to recall them; for she looked beyond measure grieved and distressed. It had been

an irresistible impulse. He did not feel sure that she was not angry. There was such a burning blush on her cheek, and such a singular expression in her countenance; but the blush passed away, and a look of great sweetness took the place of that strange expression.

"M. d'Auban," she said, earnestly and steadily, "it is better at once, this very day, under the shadow of the cross beneath which we stand, to tell you the truth."

"Oh, yes!" he exclaimed; "the truth—the whole truth."

"The truth which what you said just now compels me to speak. For every possible reason we can never be more than friends; and if you would not drive me away from the home, where after much suffering I have found peace, and if you would still help me to be good and happy, you will never allude to this subject again."

"Is this an irrevocable decision?"

"It is not a decision I have had to make; it is, I repeat it, a truth I am telling you."

"You are not free, then?"

"No, I am not free." She paused and hesitated a little. "If I was so there would still be reasons why I could not be your wife."

He remained silent. The disappointment was severe. She saw it was. Her voice trembled as she said—

"You have been all kindness to me, and the truest friend a woman ever had. I owe you more than I can ever repay. But do not ask me to explain; if you can, banish the wish to know more about me than that I was once miserable and am now contented;—that I had neither faith nor hope when I came here, and that now, thanks to you, I have both."

"That is enough for me!" he eagerly cried—"quite, quite enough. I will seek to banish all other thoughts. The

hope I had dared to indulge was not altogether a selfish one."

"I know it well. You wanted to help, to comfort me. Now your friend knows all." She said this, pointing to Father Maret's house. "He has given me the consolation, the advice I so much needed. He is teaching me where to find strength; he will direct my future course. But this I wish to say before I leave you to-day. Whether we are to continue to dwell in the same place, or should we part not to meet again, there is a thought that will never leave me as long as I live. I may forget many things—many there are I would fain forget but what you have done for me. . . ." She stopped, almost unable to speak for tears, and pointed to the part of the church where the altar stood, then almost immediately added, "I never can forget that you brought me *here*; that you brought me to *Him*!"

It was not all at once that d'Auban could collect his thoughts sufficiently to realize fully what had passed that day, and how different had been the result from what he had expected. The event he had so ardently desired had indeed come to pass, and ardent also was the gratitude he felt for this great blessing; but the earthly hopes connected with it had suddenly vanished. What he had felt to be the great barrier between him and Madame de Moldau was removed, and yet was he to give up all idea of marrying her. "Not free!" He repeated those words, over and over again. "Not free, and even if free, never to be his wife." He pondered over the meaning of these words, and formed a thousand different suppositions in connexion with them. The mystery was to remain as deep as ever, he had all but promised not to try to discover it. A hard struggle it was, from that day forward, to conceal feelings which were stronger

than he was aware of. During the whole of the past year he had looked forward to a time when he might avow them. He had formed projects and built up schemes connected with a vision of domestic happiness. When he used to read aloud to the assembled party at St. Agathe, or when he drove Madame de Moldau in his sledge over the noiseless frozen prairies, or when bringing home the game after a hunting expedition, he was always dreaming of the time when she would be his wife; and as the hue of health returned to her cheek, and elasticity to her step, as her laugh was now and then heard about the house and in the garden; and above all, when she began to attend the Church of the Mission, and to join in all its services, the dream turned into a real hope, the sudden overthrow of which was a bitter trial. Had she given him reason to hope? Had she encouraged him to love her? This is often a difficult question to answer, especially when people have been thrown together under extraordinary circumstances, or when affection may exist to a certain degree unconsciously. He dwelt on that last thought. He could not but think she cared for him, but then, if she was not free, their relative position was not only a difficult, but also a dangerous one, and perhaps she would be advised to leave St. Agathe, or perhaps he ought to go away himself. This would be scarcely possible, considering how his own and M. de Chambelle's fortunes were embarked in his present undertakings. He felt himself bound, and this was the practical resolution he formed, not to complicate the difficulties which might arise on this point by giving way henceforward to the expression of feelings not warranted by simple friendship. He would not, by word or look, recall to her mind the words he had hastily spoken, or give her reason to think

that he cherished them in his breast—nay, he would try to subdue them. He would work, not seven years only, as the patriarch for his bride, but, if needs be, all his life, without hope or reward. It was a difficult resolution to act up to, but his sense of honour, his feelings of generosity as well as the dictates of conscience, the dread of driving her away from St. Agathe, enabled him to keep it. His strength of character and habits of self-control stood him in good stead. She did not guess how much he was suffering, whilst every thing went on as usual in the course of their daily life.

Meanwhile, another conversion had taken place at St. Agathe. M. de Chambelle, a philosopher of the new school of French infidelity, a despiser of creeds, a free thinker, who had taken unbelief on trust as some do their belief; but who, if he worshipped nothing else, worshipped Madame de Moldau—began to feel leanings towards a religion which made her look so much happier. He borrowed a prayer book, went to church and tried to say his prayers; and when he caught the fever, and shivering, weak, and miserable, was laid up for several weeks, Father Maret, like a Jesuit that he was, sat up with him night after night and robbed him of his scepticism. It oozed from him in the silence of those watches whilst he lay suffering in his uneasy bed, and Christian love and fatherly kindness came near for the first time to his aged heart. There was one green spot in that poor withered heart, but it had never been watered by the dew of heaven. Life had never been much more than a ceremony to him till it had become a suffering. He had bowed and smiled and fidgeted through its long course, and was puzzled at finding what a weary thing it had become. But when he recovered from this illness,

the feeble wistful face wore a happier look. The timid heart and narrow mind expanded in the sunshine of faith.

A festival day was at hand at the Mission. It was to take place on the 8th of September, and great preparations were making for it both at St. Agathe and at the Concession d'Auban. Wreaths of flowers, large nosegays of roses and magnolias, and heaps of candles made of the pure green wax of the country, had been conveyed across the river on the preceding evening; and early in the morning, Madame de Moldau, Simonette, and Antoine joined Thérèse and her friends, and helped them to decorate the church. Beautiful were the bunches of feathers brought by the Christian Indians, and the skins of leopards and bisons which carpeted the floor of the sanctuary. Garlands of Spanish moss, intermixed with white and purple blossoms, hung from one pilaster to another on both sides of the church.

In the afternoon there was to be a feast for the children, and Simonette had prepared large bowls of sagamity sweetened with maple syrup, and baked cakes of Indian corn.

Great was the excitement of the youthful assembly, gay the scene, and happy the faces of the congregation, when, after mass, they spread themselves over the greensward and began to play and eat under the tulip trees. A French fiddler struck up the "*Carillon de Dunquerque*," which set his country people, old and young, dancing away with all their hearts. The negroes' banjoes marked the cadence of their characteristic melodies; whilst the Indians accompanied with yells and shrieks their pantomimic and, for the most part, figurative performances.

Madame de Moldau had never witnessed any thing like this before. She was much amused with the animated

scene, and, throwing down her straw hat on the grass, entered into its spirit with the glee of a child. As she was playing with a little negro boy, who had jumped into her arms, her hair got unfastened and rolled down her back.

"Do call Simonette to put up my hair," she said, with a bright smile, to d'Auban, who was standing a little way off.

He went to look for her. Thérèse said she was gone to St. Agathe to get some provisions which had been left behind. He walked towards the river and saw her coming. He saw, the minute he caught sight of her face, that she was in one of her troubled moods.

"Madame de Moldau wants you," he said.

"There are people at your house who want *you*, sir," she answered.

"Have you been there?"

"No, but I saw their servant Hans at the pavillon. He says they have brought you letters."

"Are they French?"

"They speak French, but I think they are Germans or Russians."

"I must go and see about them. Will you tell Madame de Moldau that perhaps I may bring them to the village this afternoon? It will be an amusing sight for European travellers."

"She must come home, sir. M. de Chambelle is worse again. He is gone to bed with the fever."

"I am very sorry to hear it; and what a pity that it should be to-day. She seemed so happy—so amused!"

Simonette made one of her usual shrugs, and said, "She had better make the best of her time, then."

D'Auban thought her manner very disagreeable, but he knew it always was so when she was out of temper, and supposed this was just now the case. Simonette went on to the village, whilst he crossed the river, and hastened first to St. Agathe, where he found M. de

Chambelle ill in bed, as Simonette had said, and somewhat light-headed—and then to his own house, where he found the three gentlemen she had mentioned.

He had never seen any of them before. General Brockdorf was a stiff, military-looking man, a Hanoverian by birth, but an officer in the Russian army; M. Reinhart was also a German, and Count Levacheff was a Russian. He was by far the most pleasing of the three. They had brought him letters of introduction from the Vicomte de Harlay, and also from M. Perrier, at whose house they had been staying during the days they had spent at New Orleans. They were now travelling to Canada through the Illinois and the Arkansas.

After half an hour's conversation, he set before them some refreshments, and, begging them to excuse him for a short time, he hurried back to St. Agathe, to see if Madame de Moldau had returned. She was so shy of strangers, that he did not venture to bring these travellers to her house without her permission. She had just arrived with Simonette, who had rowed her across the river. He saw at once that she was very nervous.

"Some travellers are just arrived," he said, as he joined them.

"So I hear," she answered. "Do they stay long?"

"No, only a few hours. Two of them are friends of De Harlay's. They would like very much to see his *folly*. Would you have any objection to my bringing them here?"

"Who and what are they?"

D'Auban mentioned their names, and added, "I have heard of the two first, but I know nothing of M. Reinhart."

"He was on board the boat which brought us up the river. I would rather not have seen him again. Have they told you any news?"

"Not much—nothing of importance;

but every thing about the Old World is more or less interesting here."

"Where do they come from?"

"From Paris, in the last instance."

Madame de Moldau bit her lip, and pressed her hand on her forehead. She stood the picture of irresolution.

"It is very provoking that M. de Chambelle should be ill," she said, "and too ill even to advise me."

The tone in which this was said would have pained d'Auban, if he had not at the same time observed that her eyes were filled with tears.

"There is really no necessity for your seeing these gentlemen," he gently said. "They need not come at all if it distresses you; or, if you like to stay up stairs, I could show them the hall and the verandah."

"Oh! of course I know I can do as I like."

This was said with a slight irritation of manner, which did not escape him. She seemed to have the greatest difficulty in making up her mind.

"You can bring them here," she said at last, but did not mention whether it was her intention to see them or not.

He supposed she meant to keep in her own apartment.

When he left the house she went up to her father's room. He was dozing, and talked in his sleep of missing volumes, and the binding of a book which had been sent by the King of Poland. She sighed deeply, gave some directions to his Indian nurse, and went to change her dress.

When she came down to the parlour she had put on a large lace veil, which nearly covered her face as well as her head. She called Simonette.

"Get the shawl," she said, "which we used to hang against the window. My eyes are weak; I should like the room darkened."

This was done, and she sat down with her back to the light. Simonette

was looking almost as nervous as her mistress. "Here are the gentlemen," she said, when the hall-door opened.

D'Auban almost started with surprise at finding her in the parlour, and at the darkness of the room. He introduced the strangers.

She greeted them with her usual graceful dignity of manner, and then said in a low muffled voice which did not sound like her own: "I hope, gentlemen, you will excuse my receiving you in so dark a room. My health is not strong, and the light hurts my eyes."

D'Auban thought of the way he had seen her a few hours before playing with the children in the broad sunshine, and a chilling sensation crept to his heart.

General Brockdorf made some complimentary remarks on the beauty of St. Agathe, and mentioned his acquaintance with M. de Harlay.

Count Levacheff, who had also seen him in Paris, playfully described the Frenchman's ecstasy at finding himself again in the capital of the civilized world. "For my part," he added, "I find it very interesting to travel through a country so unlike what one has seen elsewhere. The grandeur of the scenery is sublime, and makes one forget the vulgar evils of insufficient provisions, tormenting insects, and rapacious boatmen. I suppose that the beauty of the country has lost its novelty, and perhaps its charm, for you, madame?"

"The views are beautiful and the climate also," Madame de Moldau answered, in the same unnatural voice. Turning to General Brockdorf, she said: "Is it for the sole pleasure of travelling that you visit this country?"

"Not altogether, madame. The Emperor of Russia has commissioned me to draw up a report of the natural features and peculiar productions of this newly-discovered continent. Every

thing which tends to progress, to enlightenment, and to civilization attracts the attention of his imperial majesty."

"Is the Czar as active as ever," asked d'Auban, "in carrying out his vast designs?"

"He has achieved wonders," the General replied, "and only lives to plan yet greater marvels."

"But are there not men of eminence and worth in Russia who, whilst they allow the merits of some of the Czar's innovations, do not approve of his mode of government, and who, whilst they admire the genius exhibited in the sudden creation of a new capital, have not transferred to it their attachment to the old Russian metropolis—time-honoured Moscow?"

"You are right," exclaimed Count Levacheff, "the heart of Russia is in Moscow."

"Not its brains," said the General.

"That last-mentioned article," observed Reinhart, who had not yet spoken, and who kept his eyes fixed on Madame de Moldau with marked pertinacity, "the Czar chiefly imports from foreign countries. St. Petersburg is a haven of refuge for needy Frenchmen and German adventurers. The Czaro-vitch has announced his intention of sweeping away, when he comes to the throne, the invading hordes, as he calls them. He is a genuine Muscovite."

"He is as great a brute as ever lived," said Levacheff.

"With the exception of his father," observed d'Auban, who even at that distance of time could not quite endure to hear the Emperor mentioned with praise.

"Ah! but there is this difference between them," said the Count: "genius and strength adorn the character of the father with a kind of wild grandeur. The weakness of the son makes his brutality as despicable as it is hateful."

"Is it true that he has lately returned to Russia upon Count Mentzchikoff's assurance that he would receive a full pardon?"

"He has certainly returned, but has been thrown into prison. His friends say he was cruelly deceived. Others, that some fresh plots were discovered since that promise was given. What gave much surprise in Russia was his taking refuge at the Emperor of Austria's court, seeing the reports which were circulated at the time of his wife's death."

"Was he supposed to have had a share in her death?"

"So it was said. People believe she died in consequence of a violent blow he had given her. Others said her attendants poisoned her at his instigation."

"Aye," put in Reinhart, "and ran away with her jewels."

"The matter was hushed up. It was thought the Prince would have been implicated in the matter, and the Czar did not at that time wish to come to extremities with him. Now it is thought he would be glad to crush him. The late princess was a great favourite of his, and he was very angry with his son for the horrible way in which he treated her, as well as for his intrigues with the reactionary party. The Czarovitch is devoted to the old Moscovite cause, and fanatically attached to the orthodox religion. But the politics of Russia are not, I should imagine, the most interesting subject of conversation to a French lady, who would no doubt prefer to hear of the gaieties of Paris, never more brilliant than last winter."

M. Reinhart moved his chair nearer to Madame de Moldau's, and, interrupting Count Levacheff, said, "I fancy that madame is better acquainted with St. Petersburg than with Paris. If I am not mistaken, she has resided there some years?"

Simonette turned crimson. Her hand was resting on the back of her mistress's chair, and she felt her trembling violently. She answered, however, with tolerable composure: "I have been both at Paris and at St. Petersburg."

D'Auban's heart beat fast when she said this. He had never heard her say as much as that before about her past life.

"Did not madame occupy a position in the household of the late princess?"

"No, sir," answered Madame de Moldau in a louder and more distinct tone of voice than before; then slightly changing her position, she turned to Count Levacheff and said, "How was the Empress Catherine when you left St. Petersburg?"

"In good health, I believe," he answered.

"You said, I think, the Czarovitch was returned?"

"Yes, and he was imprisoned in his palace."

"Did you hear any thing of his son?"

"He lives in the Emperor's palace."

"Is he like his grandfather?"

"More like his late mother, I believe."

"I saw the young prince two or three times whilst I was at St. Petersburg; but I am not apt to take much notice of children, even when they are imperial highnesses. He seemed a rosy little boy; with fair curling hair."

Madame de Moldau sank back in her chair, apparently exhausted with the attempt she had made at conversation. D'Auban proposed to conduct the visitors over the plantation. But she made an effort to sit up, and again addressed Count Levacheff.

"Was the Comtesse de Konigsmark at St. Petersburg?" she asked.

Before he had time to reply, M. Reinhart said in a half-whisper, "Would

not you like to obtain some information, madame, about a casket which was once in the countess's care?"

Madame de Moldau fainted away. Simonette received her into her arms, but there was no tenderness in the expression of her face as she bent over her drooping form; she looked on her colourless face with more scorn than pity. D'Auban felt angry and miserable. He led the strangers out of the house into the garden, and murmured something to the effect that Madame de Moldau was a great invalid.

"If you take my advice," said Reinhart, "you will have as little as possible to do with that lady. I feel certain now of what I suspected at New Orleans."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed d'Auban fiercely.

He would willingly have thrown into the river or trampled under foot the being who dared to speak of Madame de Moldau in that insulting manner; but, at the same time, a sickening doubt stole into his heart.

Reinhart was so struck by his agitation, that it suddenly occurred to him that discretion is the best part of valour. He had not the slightest wish to entangle himself in a quarrel with Madame de Moldau's friend, who might be, for aught he knew, a lover, or even an accomplice. He therefore said, with a forced smile, "The explanation is a very simple one: from what I have heard of this lady's beauty and charm, and what I have seen myself to-day, I should think there would be great danger of a man's losing his heart to her."

It was impossible not to accept this explanation, and equally so to believe in its veracity. The conversation dropped. Meanwhile Alexander Levacheff had disappeared. As he was leaving the house, he had turned back, as if by an irresistible impulse, and returned to

the parlour. The door was open, the window also. Madame de Moldau's veil had fallen off her face. The light was shining on her pale, lovely features. Simonette hastened to the door, and closed it almost in his face. He stood in the hall apparently transfixed—motionless with astonishment. Then, sinking down on a bench, hid his face in his hands, and remained buried in thought. D'Auban, engrossed and agitated by Reinhart's remarks, had not at first noticed his absence. When he did so, and proposed to return for him, General Brockdorf objected that they had no time to spare; that Levacheff did not know a turnip from a potato, or a sugar-cane from a coffee-plant, and would be only too thankful to have been left behind.

When Madame de Moldau had recovered a little, she went upstairs to M. de Chambelle's room. Levacheff saw her go by, but she did not notice him. After she had passed, he pressed his hands on his eyes, like a man who tries to rouse himself from a dream.

She had seated herself by her father's bed and dismissed his attendant. He was asleep. His aged features looked thin and sharp, and his scanty gray hairs were matted with perspiration. She rested her head against the bed-post, and faintly ejaculated. "Faithful unto death! Faithful through a strange, long trial; and now at last going to leave me. Oh patient and devoted heart! am I indeed about to lose you? Ah! if you had not been lying here helpless and unconscious, I should not have seen those men! Why did I see them? It was rash—it was imprudent. I do not know how to take care of myself. It would have been better to have died. Oh no! God forgive me! what am I saying? I know—I know, my God, what mercies you had in store for me. You are good—goodness itself; but I am very weak."

She heard voices in the garden, and went to close the window that the sick man might not be disturbed. It was d'Auban and his companions going away. Gradually the sound of footsteps receded. Simonette knocked at the door and gave her a slip of paper, on which some German words were written. White as a marble statue, trembling and irresolute, she stood with it in her hand, gazing on the writing as if to gain time before she answered.

"Where is the gentleman who gave you this paper?"

"In the entrance-hall."

"Where are the others?"

"They have walked out with M. d'Auban."

"Show him into my sitting-room; I will see him there."

In about an hour d'Auban and his two companions returned. As he entered the house he said to Simonette, who was standing in the porch talking to Reinhart's servant:

"How is your mistress?"

"Oh, pretty well, sir!" she answered in a careless tone.

"Is she upstairs?"

"She went upstairs, sir, when you went out."

"Do you know where Count Levacheff is?"

She turned away without answering.

Provoked at her uncivil manner, he sternly repeated his question.

She seemed to hesitate a little, and then said:

"I am not sure, sir, if madame wishes it known that he is with her in her private room."

At that moment, through the thin partition-wall which divided the hall from the little sitting-room, d'Auban heard Madame de Moldau speaking in her natural voice, and in a loud and eager manner. These words reached his ears:

"You promise, Count Levacheff, that you will not tell any person on earth that you have seen me?"

"Madame, if you insist upon it, I must; but do think better of it. Let me stay, or return, or at least write—"

D'Auban tore himself away, and ordered Simonette to go away also. She obeyed, but shrugged her shoulders, and said:

"It does not matter now whether I listen or not, M. d'Auban; I know all about her."

It was in an almost mechanical manner that d'Auban performed the remaining duties of hospitality towards the travellers. When Levacheff joined them in the verandah it would have been difficult to say which of the two seemed most disinclined to conversation, most absorbed in his own thoughts. General Brockdorf's unceasing flow of small talk proved a great resource during the last half hour of their stay. At last it was time for them to go. D'Auban could not bring himself so much as to mention Madame de Moldau's name in their presence; yet, when they got into their boat and moved away from the shore, he sighed, as if feeling that he had lost the last chance of clearing away his doubts. Levacheff and Reinhart evidently knew much more about her than he did. For two days he stayed away from St. Agathe; on the third he was sent for. M. de Chambelle was much worse, and wished to see him. Father Maret had also been summoned, but had not yet arrived. He hastened to the pavillon. The sick man's couch had been carried into the parlour, where there was more air than upstairs. Madame de Moldau was sitting by his side. He was in a high fever, talking a great deal, and much excited. When d'Auban came in he cried out:

"Ah! M. d'Auban, I was afraid I

should die without seeing you. Why have you stayed so long away?"

"I have been very busy about the plantations," he evasively answered.

Madame de Moldau tried to move away, but she could not disengage her hand from her father's dying grasp.

"M. d'Auban," cried the sick man in a feeble querulous voice, "you must make me a promise before I die. Without it I cannot die in peace; all that Father Maret can say is of no use. You know I am a young Christian though an old man. Will you promise to do what I ask you?"

"Any thing in my power I will do, my dear friend, to meet your wishes," d'Auban kindly answered.

"Will you, then, promise me never to leave her—to take care of her as I have done?"

Madame de Moldau hastily bent over the old man, and said, "Dear good father, you are asking what cannot be."

"Why not? why not?" exclaimed M. de Chambelle, raising himself in the bed; "it is my only hope, my only comfort. I tell you, I cannot, and I will not die, and I will not listen to what Father Maret says about submitting to God's will, if he does not promise me this. You will be alone in the world; not one friend left; more lonely than a beggar in the streets. That cannot be God's will. Some days ago I dreamed that he whom we never speak of had sent a man to kill you. I don't think it was a dream. I heard strange voices in the house—I am sure I did. If he sends him again, who will take care of you if M. d'Auban does not?"

"Oh! for heaven's sake, dear father, be quiet, do not talk."

"No, I will not be quiet—I will not be silent—I must say what is in my heart. When I went to confession I told Father Maret I hated somebody; I did not say who it was. Do not try

to stop me. I have always obeyed you—"

"Oh, do not say that!" exclaimed Madame de Moldau, wringing her hands.

"But I must speak now; I must plead your cause before I die. Oh, Colonel d'Auban! will you forsake her?" He grasped her hand so tightly that she could not extricate it, and fixed his eyes with a wild expression on d'Auban's face. "Look at her," he cried; "look at her well. She ought to have sat upon a throne, and men bowed down before her; and now for so long she has only had me to wait upon her—"

Madame de Moldau sank down on her knees by the bedside, pressed to her lips the hand which clasped her own, and exclaimed, "Oh, more than father! patient, kind, and loving friend! be silent now. Grieve not the heart you have so often comforted. Listen to your daughter, who would have died had it not been for you. Had God taken you from me when first we landed on these shores, I must have perished. Then, indeed, you would have had reason to fear for me. It is different now. Let this thought comfort you. Carry it with you to a better world. I have a friend who will never forsake me."

M. de Chambelle turned his dying eyes on d'Auban, who stooped and whispered, "She is not speaking of me. God is her friend now."

"Yes, dear father, I have a home in His church, a father in His priest, friends and brethren in the household of the faith. The words of the Bible, 'Thou shalt no longer be called the forsaken one,' apply to me, once an outcast and a wanderer on the face of the earth."

"Thou shalt no longer be called the forsaken one!" ejaculated the old man, gazing upon her with an inquiring look, as if trying to realize the meaning of

the sentence. Still he turned to d'Auban, and, drawing him nearer to himself, whispered in his ear :

"Will you not stay with her?"

"If she will let me, I will," he answered in the same low voice.

"Oh, thank God for that!"

"And wherever she goes, please God, I will watch over her."

"Oh! now I feel the good God has heard the prayer of a poor old sinner, who never did any good in his life. Where is Monsieur l'Abbé? The last time he came I would not say I was ready to die if it was God's will. You see, I was in waiting; there was nobody to take my place; the second librarian used to do so sometimes long ago. I wonder if he is dead; I am sure he has not forgotten her—"

Madame de Moldau hid her face in her hands; there was no checking the old man's rambling, and he detained d'Auban in the same way as he detained her. He was silent for two or three minutes, then, starting up, he turned towards him in an excited manner.

"You know I never said you were to marry her. That would be a *mésalliance*. What would they say at the palace?"

The blood rushed into d'Auban's face; but he said in a calm and steady voice, without looking at Madame de Moldau, "His mind is beginning to wander. He does not know what he says."

After a while M. de Chambelle fell asleep. By the time he woke again Father Maret had arrived. He remained with him awhile alone, and then administered to him the last Sacraments. Extreme unction was followed, as it so often is, not only by increased peace and tranquillity of soul, but by some bodily improvement. In the afternoon he appeared to rally considerably; still d'Auban did not venture to leave the pavillon, for he was continually asking for him. When the sun was setting

and a deep tranquillity reigned in the house, in which everybody moved with a light step and spoke under their breath, he sat in the porch with Madame de Moldau, conversing on the interests of the Mission and the condition of the poorer emigrants, and carefully avoiding any allusion to the past or the future, or the recent visit of the European travellers. The soft westerly wind, laden with perfumed emanations—the rustle of the leaves, and the murmuring voice of the streamlet hurrying towards the river, like one feeble soul into eternity—the singing in parts of some German labourers at work in the neighbouring forest—the beauty of the sunset sky, of the green turf and the distant view—breathed peace and tranquillity. These soothing sights and sounds were hardly in accordance with the sorrowful and anxious thoughts which filled their minds. Father Maret was walking up and down the glade saying his office. When he closed his book his kind and pensive glance rested on those two dwellers in the wilderness, the secrets of whose hearts he was acquainted with, whose future struggles and sufferings he foresaw. The hours went by on their noiseless wings, and death hovered over that pretty fanciful St. Agathe, which seemed more fitting to harbour a tribe of fairies than the sorrowing and the dying. As the light waned, M. de Chambelle grew weaker. The prayers for a departing soul were read over the expiring form of one who at the eleventh hour had been received into the fold. The priest held the crucifix before his dimmed and failing eyes. He gazed upon it earnestly, and then on Madame de Moldau. It was no longer to human friendship he was committing her. He made a sign that he wished to speak to her once more. She bent over him, and he found strength to whisper, "I have at last forgiven him." One more look at her, and one at the crucifix, and

then the old man died; and she whom he had loved so long and well lifted up her voice and wept, at first almost inaudibly, then, as the full sense of her loss, the terror of her desolate fate, broke upon her, a loud and bitter cry burst from her lips. My child! my sister! When the heart is wrung by some great grief, when a blow falls on a closed but not seared wound, there is always a cry of this sort. The old man weeping by the grave of his child remembers the wife of his youth. The bereaved mother in her hour of anguish calls on her own departed mother. The condemned criminal thinks of the priest who taught him his catechism. The past comes back upon us in those first hours of overwhelming sorrow and self-pity as if the grave gave up its dead to haunt or to console us.

The two kind friends by her side did not try to check the mourner's tears. One of them looked gently upon her, like a compassionate angel to whom God reveals the secret ways by which He trains a soul for heaven. The other gazed on her bowed-down form with

the yearning wish to take her to his heart and cherish her as his own; but he scarcely dared to utter the words of sympathy which rose to his lips, lest they should be misunderstood. His mind was in a dark and confused state. New thoughts were working in it. Thérèse came to pray for the dead and to comfort the living. Simonette was, as usual, active in doing every thing needful, but there was more displeasure than sorrow in her face; and once, when she saw d'Auban looking at Madame de Moldau with an expression of anxious tenderness, her brow darkened and an impatient exclamation escaped her lips.

The funeral was simply performed, and the European stranger buried in the little cemetery, where many a wanderer from the Old World rested by the side of his Indian brethren in the faith. Many an offering of fresh-gathered flowers was laid on his grave, for both settlers and natives had become attached to the kind childlike old man, and pitied his daughter's bereavement.

CHAPTER VII.

* * *
 See what a ready tongue suspicion hath.

* * *
Shakespeare.

Moreover something is or seems
 That touches me with mystic gleams,
 Like glimpses of forgotten dreams.

Tennyson.

By Father Maret's advice Madame de Moldau came to spend a few days with Thérèse. Her hut was clean though a very poor abode, and the change of air and scene proved beneficial to her health. The near neighbourhood of the church was a great comfort also, and to get away from Simonette a relief. Her temper had

grown almost unbearable, and her manner to her mistress very offensive. She governed her household and directed all her affairs, however, with so much zeal and intelligence that she could ill have spared her; but the momentary separation seemed at this time acceptable to both.

D'Auban came sometimes to the vil-

lage to see Madame de Moldau: but since the strangers' visit, and especially since what had passed when they both watched M. de Chambelle's death-bed, they had not felt at their ease together. He especially felt exceedingly embarrassed in his intercourse with her. It now seemed to him evident that she must have occupied some position which she was intensely anxious to conceal. The promise he had heard her exact from Count Levacheff and poor M. de Chambelle's rambling expressions about a *mésalliance* and a palace pointed to this conclusion. He racked his brains to form some guess, some supposition as to the possible cause of her retirement from the world and the mystery in which it was enveloped. Once it occurred to him that, with the romantic sentimentality ascribed to some of her countrywomen, she had, perhaps, sacrificed herself, and abandoned a lover or even a husband for the sake of some other person, and resolved never to make her existence known. It was just possible that a highly-wrought sensibility, a false generosity unchecked by fixed religious principles, might have led her into some such course, and involved her in endless difficulties. It was not difficult to believe she was of noble birth. Nobility was stamped on her features, her figure, and every one of her movements. It struck even the Indians. They said she ought to be a Woman-Sun—the title given to the female sovereigns of some of their tribes. During her stay with Thérèse, Madame de Moldau improved her knowledge of the language of the country, and under her guidance occupied herself with works of charity. At the end of a fortnight she returned to St. Agathe. D'Auban was waiting for her with his boat at the spot they called the ferry. He saw she had been weeping, and his heart ached for her. It was a desolate thing to come back to a

home where neither relative nor friend, only servants, awaited her return. He made some remark of this kind as they approached the house.

"Yes," she said, sinking down on the bench in the porch with a look of deep despondency—"yes, the return is sad. What will the departure be?"

D'Auban started as if he had been shot. "What do you mean? You are not going away?"

"Yes, I must go, and you must not ask me to stay."

He did not utter a word, but remained with his eyes fixed on the ground, and his lips tightly compressed. She was distressed at his silence, and at last said:

"You are not angry with me, M. d'Auban, for resolving to do what is right?"

"Right!" he bitterly exclaimed. "Alas! madame, can I know what is right? I know not who you are, where you come from, where you are going. What I do know is, that from the first day I saw you my only thought has been to shield you from suffering, to guard you from danger, to watch over you as a father or as a brother. When you told me to give up other hopes, I shut up my grief in my heart. I never allowed a word to escape from my lips which could offend or displease you. What more could a man do? Have I ever given you reason to distrust me? Have I obliged you to go away? But I am a fool; what poor M. de Chambelle said has misled me. You have other friends, I suppose, other prospects—"

"None."

"Then why—why must you go? What has been my fault? Cannot you forget my rash words? Cannot you rely on my promise never again—"

"Oh, M. d'Auban! it is not your fault that I must go. It was not your fault that I heard you say what I can never forget. Mine has been the fault. Would that the suffering might be

mine alone; because your sympathy at first, and then as time went on your friendship, was precious to me; because I thought only of myself, and of the consolation I found in your society, sorrow has come upon us both. Nay, I will add one word more. Before I became a Catholic it did not seem to me quite impossible . . . my ideas were different from what they now are. . . I did not consider myself absolutely bound. . . Now, you see, there remains nothing for us but to part."

"Why should you think so? Why not let me work for you—watch over you? . . . You can trust me."

A deep blush rose in her cheek, as she quickly answered, "But I cannot—I ought not to trust myself."

A strange feeling of mingled pain and joy thrilled through his heart, for he now felt that his affection was returned; but he also saw that what she had said was true—that they must part. Another silence ensued; then, with a despairing resignation, he asked, "And where can you go?"

"To Canada," she answered. "Father Maret will recommend me to the Bishop of Montreal and to some French ladies there."

"Will you sell this property?"

"No; not if you will manage it for me."

"Yes, I will; and the day may come when you will revisit it."

"Perhaps so," she said, with a mournful smile—"when we are both very old."

"And how will you travel?"

"There is a party of missionaries expected here, and a French gentleman and his wife. They are on their way to Canada. Father Maret is going to arrange about my joining them. He hopes we may reach Montreal before the wet season sets in."

"So be it," murmured d'Auban; and

from that moment they both sought to cheer and encourage each other, to bear with courage the approaching separation. With true delicacy of feeling she showed him how entirely she confided all her interests to his care—how she reposed on the thought of his disinterested and active friendship. He planned for the comfort of her journey, and resolved to spare her as much as possible the knowledge of what he suffered. In spite of the reserve she observed as to the past and the sad uncertainty of the future, they understood each other better than they had done yet, and there was some consolation in that feeling.

But when he had taken leave of her that day, and he thought that he should soon see her go forth with strangers from that house where he had so carefully watched over her, his courage almost failed. The sight of the blooming garden, the brightness of the sunshine, oppressed his soul; and when the sound of a light French carol struck on his ear he turned round and angrily addressed Simonette, who was watering the flowers in the verandah and singing at the same time.

"I am surprised to see you in such good spirits so soon after your kind old master's death, and at the very moment of his daughter's return to her desolate home. I thought there was more gratitude in your character."

The expression of her face changed at once. "Do *you* call me ungrateful, M. d'Auban?" she said, with a sigh. "Well, be it so. Even that I will put up with from you. But what gratitude do I owe to these people?"

"They are your benefactors."

"Indeed! Is that the meaning of the word in Europe? Is the person who devotes her time, her labour, and her wits to the service of poor helpless beings, who can do nothing for themselves, and receives a little money and

perhaps a few kind words in return, the obliged party, and they the benefactors? In this country, I think, the terms might be reversed."

D'Auban felt even more provoked with her manner than her words, and answered with a frown—

"I wonder that you can speak of your mistress in this manner."

"My mistress! I have never considered her as such. I undertook this hateful service, M. d'Auban, solely at your request and for your sake, and you call me ungrateful. You speak unkindly to me, who have worked hard for these people because you wished it, and that your will has always been a law to me. For your sake, and in a way you do not know and do not understand, I have suffered the most cruel anxiety. Because I have been afraid of your displeasure I have been silent when perhaps I ought to have spoken; and yet for your sake I ought to speak, and, at the risk of making you angry, I will. Yes, at all risks, I must say it. You are blind—you are infatuated about that woman—"

"Hush! I will not hear such language as this."

"But you must hear it, or I will expose her to those who will listen to the truth. Others shall hear me if you will not."

"Speak then," said d'Auban sternly. The time had arrived when he felt himself justified in listening to Simonette's disclosures. Matters had come to a crisis, and on Madame de Moldau's own account it was necessary he should hear what Simonette had to say. He made a sign to her to sit down, and stood before her with his arms folded and looking so stern that she began to tremble. "Speak," he again said, with more vehemence than before, for he saw she hesitated.

At last she steadied her voice and

spoke as follows: "Sir, it was at New Orleans that I first saw Madame de Moldau. I heard at that time that there was something mysterious about her. People said she was not called by her real name, and a servant, who arrived there with her, and soon after returned to Europe, let fall some hints that she had reasons for concealing her own. She and her father came on board our boat at night; M. Reinhart, and his servant Hans, were amongst the passengers. He said he had seen her before, and that there were strange stories about them—that they were supposed to be adventurers, or even swindlers. Nobody could understand why an old man and a handsome delicate woman, not apparently in any want of money, should come to this country with the intention of taking up their abode in a remote settlement. At Fort St. Louis M. Reinhart and Hans left us, and I did not see them again till they came here with those other gentlemen. When you proposed to me to enter Madame de Moldau's service, you must, I am sure, remember that I declined to do so. I only wish I had persevered in my refusal. But you seemed very anxious I should accept your offer. You said it would be an act of charity. You did not speak of benefactors then. My father urged me also. But what really decided me was this: It was said you admired her, and that you would soon marry the lady at St. Agathe. I thought if I lived with her I should be sure to find out whether the stories about her were true or false, and that I might be the means of saving you from marrying an impostor—"

"You have no right to speak in that way," interrupted d'Auban, tried beyond endurance by the girl's language and manner. "It is a vile calumny."

"It is no such thing, M. d'Auban; you desired me to speak and you must

near me to the end. I know she does not seem an impostor—I can hardly believe her to be one; but you shall judge yourself. Well might people wonder where their money came from! I soon found out that she had many rich jewels in her possession. One of the things Hans had told me was, that her father had sold some valuable diamonds at New Orleans, and lodged the money in a banker's hand. It was reported at the same time that, in a palace in Europe, a casket was stolen which contained the jewels of a princess lately dead. It must have been the princess mentioned in the newspaper you were reading out loud one night some days ago, and which madame sent me to borrow from you the next morning. Well, the report was that her servants had stolen this casket and fled the country."

"St. Petersburg was the town you mean, and the princess, the wife of the Czarovitch of Russia."

"Yes, the Princess Charlotte, I think they called her. Hans says his master is persuaded that these people are those very servants."

"I don't believe a word of it."

"He says that M. de Chambelle's real name is Sasse, and that he lived at the court of the princess's father; that he saw him there a great many years ago. And now I must tell you what I myself discovered. I picked up on the grass near the house a casket with a picture inside it set in diamonds, and on the back of the casket, in small pearls, was written the name of Peter the First, Emperor of all the Russias. I saw it with my own eyes, and the diamonds were very large, and the gold beautifully worked. I have seen things of this sort at New Orleans, but nothing half so handsome."

"You saw this with your own eyes!" repeated d'Auban, turning very pale. "But are you certain it belonged to

Madame de Moldau?" he quickly added. "What did you do with it?"

"I was almost inclined to take it to you, sir, or to Father Maret; but on the whole thought it best to return it to her."

"And when you did so?"

"She seemed embarrassed, but said it was her property. And I made some observations which were painful to her, about people having secrets; and she spoke of parting with me. But it did not come to that. She did not really wish me to go, nor did I really wish to leave her. I have never been happy since that time. Sometimes I cannot help feeling sorry for her; but when I think she is deceiving you, I should like to drag her before the governor and accuse her to her face. When those gentlemen came here, Hans told me that the story of the stolen jewels was talked of more than ever at New Orleans, and people now say that the princess was murdered, that her husband was concerned in it, and had himself helped the servants to escape. Did you not notice that M. Reinhart asked her that day if she had been in the princess's household? She answered, 'No;' but I could feel, as I held the back of her chair, that she trembled, and when he spoke of the casket, then she fainted right away. Good heavens! how ill you look, M. d'Auban! Alas! alas! what can I do? I am only speaking the truth. I wish with all my heart it was otherwise. Hate me if you will, despise, disbelieve me, but do not be rash. Do not marry this deceitful woman. You suspect me, perhaps. You think that I hope or expect . . . Oh never, never in my wildest dreams has such a thought crossed my mind! If she was as good as she looks, if she would make you happy, willingly would I be her slave and yours all my life. If you knew how wretched it makes me to see you look so miserable!

But, oh! if you marry her and she is guilty!—"

"My dear Simonette," said d'Auban, interrupting her, but speaking much more gently than he had yet done, "I am sure you mean kindly by me. I should be indeed ungrateful did I not believe in your sincerity. The circumstances you have related are most extraordinary; I certainly cannot at this moment account for them. But still, I would entreat you to suspend your judgment. Do not decide against her till you know more."

"Ah! that is what Father Maret always says; but I am afraid she deceives you both."

D'Auban eagerly caught at those words. "Is that what he says? Then he does not think her guilty?"

"He does not say one thing or the other."

"Well, Simonette, I again thank you for your kindness to myself, and I entreat you, for the present, at least, not to speak on this subject to any one else. I feel bound to tell you that, in spite of the apparent evidence to the contrary, I still firmly believe in Madame de Moldau's innocence."

"And you will marry her?" exclaimed Simonette, wringing her hands.

D'Auban tried to speak calmly, but he felt as if the secret recesses of his heart were being probed by the poor girl's pertinacious solicitude.

"There is not the least prospect of my marrying Madame de Moldau. Do not distress yourself on that point; and for my sake be kind and attentive to her during the time she will yet remain here."

"Is she going away, sir?"

D'Auban covered his face with his hands. She looked at him with anguish. "How you must hate me!" she murmured.

"No," he said, recovering his composure. "No, Simonette, much as I

suffer, I do not blame you, my poor girl. It is natural you should have had suspicions—it could not have been otherwise. But I cannot talk to you any more now; I must be alone and think over what you have told me. May we all do what is right. If you are going to the village this evening, tell Father Maret I will call on him early to-morrow, and ask him and Thérèse to pray for us."

That evening he sat in his study gazing on the glowing embers and absorbed in thought. Sometimes he started up and walked up and down the room, making a full stop now and then, or, going up to the chimney, rested his head on his hands. "It would be too strange—too incredible," he ejaculated; "and yet the more I think of it, the more does the idea gain upon me. No, no; it is a trick of the imagination. If it was so, how did I never come to think of it before? Yet it tallies with all the rest. It would explain every thing. But I think I am going out of my mind to suppose such a thing."

There was a knock at the door, and when he said "Come in," Simon appeared.

He had returned, he said, from the north lakes, whither he had accompanied the travellers who had lately been d'Auban's guests. He thought he would like to hear of their having journeyed so far in safety. Hans had come back with him; he had had a dispute with his master about wages, and they had parted company. "He is gone to St. Agathe this evening; I fancy he admires my girl. They have always plenty to say to each other. He is a sharp fellow, Hans, and does not let the grass grow under his feet."

D'Auban felt a vague uneasiness at hearing of this man's return. It was from him Simonette had heard all the stories against Madame de Moldau. "I

should not think," he said, "that this man can be a desirable acquaintance for your daughter."

"He seems a good fellow enough, and says that if she will take his advice he can show her how to better herself."

"In what way?"

"He does not exactly say, but I don't see why she should leave her present situation. Her wages are good, and I do not find she has any thing to complain of; but she has always had a queer sort of temper. For my part, I think she might go farther and fare worse. Well, M. d'Auban, I only just looked in to let you know about your friends; I am off again to-morrow to the Arkansas. Have you any commands?"

"No, thank you, nothing this time. But just stop a minute; you have not had a glass of my French brandy. What do you know of this Hans's former history?"

"Not much. He has been in Spain, and Italy, and Russia. We never do know much of the people who come out here."

"I think you had better warn Simonette not to act on his advice as regards a change of situation. He cannot be a safe adviser or companion for her."

"She does not like him a bit. The girl's as proud as a peacock; I wish she was married and off my hands. Well, this is good cognac, M. d'Auban. It does a man's heart good, and puts him in mind of *la belle France*. I was thinking, as I walked here, how good your brandy always is."

"It was fortunate, then, I did not forget to offer you a glass of it," d'Auban said with a smile.

When the bargeman was gone he began again to turn over in his mind the new strange thought which had occupied him for the last two or three hours. From the first day he had made Madame de Mo'dau's acquaintance he

had been haunted by a fancy that he had seen her before, that her face was not new to him. But that afternoon, whilst Simonette was talking to him, when she mentioned the wife of the Czarovitch (the Princess Charlotte of Brunswick), the thought darted through his mind that the person she reminded him of was this very princess. This idea brought with it a whole train of recollections. Some seven or eight years ago he was travelling with General Lefort, and they had stopped for two days at Wolfenbittel, and been invited to a dinner and a ball at the ducal palace. Now that he came to think of it, what an astonishing likeness there was between the lady at St. Agathe and the Czarovitch's affianced bride as he remembered her in her girlhood,—a fair creature, delicate as a harebell, and white as a snowdrop. But it was impossible. He laughed at himself for giving a serious thought to so preposterous a conjecture, for was it not well known that that princess was dead? Had she not been carried in state to her escutcheoned tomb,

With knightly plumes and banners all waving in the wind,

and her broken heart laid to rest under a monumental stone as hard as her fate and as silent as her misery? Can the grave give up its dead? Had she returned from the threshold of another world? Such things have been heard of. Truth is sometimes more extraordinary than fiction. He thought of the story of Romeo and Juliet, and of the young Ginevra rescued from the charnel-house by her Florentine lover. It is impossible to describe the state of excitement in which he spent that night—now convinced that his conjecture was a reality, now scouting it as an absurdity—sometimes wishing it might prove true, sometimes hoping it might turn out false; for if the chivalry

and romance of his nature made him long to see the woman he loved at once cleared from the least suspicion, and to pay that homage to her as a princess which he had instinctively rendered to the daughter of an obscure emigrant; on the other hand, if she was the Princess Charlotte of Brunswick, she was also the wedded wife of the Czarovitch, and he saw the full meaning of the words she had said on the day she had been received into a Church in which the holy band of marriage is never unloosed, where neither ill-usage, nor desertion, nor crime, nor separation, annihilates the vow once uttered before the altar. Though an ocean may roll its ceaseless tides and a lifetime its revolving years between those it has united, the Catholic Church never sanctions the severance of that tie, but still reiterates the warning of John the Baptist to a guilty king, and that of Pope Clement VII., fifteen hundred years later, to a licentious monarch, "It is not lawful; it may not be."

Of one thing he felt certain. If Madame de Moldau was the Princess Charlotte, it was impossible to conceive a more extraordinary or more interesting position than hers, or one more fitted to command a disinterested allegiance and unselfish devotion from the man she had honoured with her friendship. If something so incredible could be true, every mystery would be explained—every doubt would be solved. The blood rushed to his face as he thought of the proposal of marriage he had made to one of so exalted a rank, and of the feelings which it must have awakened in her breast. "Perhaps," he thought to himself, "though too generous to resent it, she may have found in those words spoken in ignorance one of the bitterest and most humiliating evidences of her fallen position;" but then he remembered the tacit

avowal Madame de Moldau had made of feelings which did not imply that she was indifferent to his attachment. "Ah!" he again thought, "she may wish to withdraw not only from the man she may not wed, but from him whose presumptuous attachment was an unconscious insult! But I am mad, quite mad," he would exclaim, "to be reasoning on so absurd an hypothesis, to be building a whole tissue of conjectures on an utter impossibility; but then M. de Chambelle's dying words recurred to him—those strange incoherent expressions about a *mésalliance* and a palace, and their relations together, so unlike those of a father and a child, and yet so full of devotion on his side and of gratitude on hers.

One by one he went over all the circumstances Simonette had related. The reports at New Orleans, the sale of the jewels, the Czar's picture in her possession, the stranger's visit, her agitation when the casket was mentioned—every thing tallied with his wild guess. It would have been evident had it not been incredible. As it was, he felt utterly bewildered.

As soon as light dawned he rode to the village. There he heard that Hans had gone away in the night with a party of *coureurs des bois*. He breakfasted with Father Maret, and all the time was wondering if, supposing Madame de Moldau was the princess, he was aware of it. She said she had told him every thing about herself, so he supposed he did. This thought inspired him with a sort of embarrassment, and, though longing to speak of what his mind was full of, he did not mention her name. As soon as the meal was over he returned to St. Agathe, where he had business to transact with Madame de Moldau. He found her sitting at a table in the verandah looking over the map of the concession. She raised her eyes, so

full in their blue depths of a soft and dreamy beauty, to greet him as he approached, and he felt sure at that moment that they were the eyes of the royal maiden of seventeen years of age with whom he had danced one night in her father's palace. He sat down by her as usual, and they began talking of business; but he was, for the first time perhaps in his life, absent and inattentive to the subject before him. He was reverting to one of those trifling circumstances which remain impressed on a person's memory, and which just then came back into his mind. When the young princess was dancing with him she had mentioned that the lady opposite to them had undergone a painful operation to improve the beauty of her features. "I do not think it was worth while," she said; and then, pointing to a mole on her own arm, had added—"I have been sometimes advised to have this mole burnt off, but I never would."

He remembered as well as possible where that mole was—a little higher than the wrist, between the hand and the elbow of the left arm. Could he but see the arm, which was resting near him on the table covered by a lace sleeve, all doubt would be at an end. He could not take his eyes off it, and watched her hand which was taking pencil notes of what he was saying. At that moment a small spider crept out of a bunch of flowers on to the table, and then towards the sleeve so anxiously watched. D'Auban noticed its progress with the same anxiety with which Robert Bruce must have observed that of the insect whose perseverance decided his own. The creature passed from the lace edging to the white arm. Madame de Moldau gave a little scream and pulled up the sleeve. D'Auban removed the insect, and saw the mole in the very spot where he remembered it. He carried away the

spider and laid it on the grass. His heart was beating like the pendulum of a clock; he did not understand a word she was saying. He could only look at her with speechless emotion.

"Sit down again, M. d'Auban," she said, "and explain to me where you want to build those huts."

He hesitated, made as if he was going to do as she desired, but, suddenly sinking down on one knee by her side, he took her hand and raised it with the deepest respect to his lips. She turned round, surprised at this action, and she saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"What has happened?—what is the matter?" she exclaimed.

"Nothing, Princess, only I know every thing now. Forgive, forget the past, and allow me henceforward to be your servant."

"You! my servant! God forbid! But, good heavens! who has told you? M. d'Auban, I had promised never to reveal this secret."

"You have kept your promise, Princess; nothing but accidental circumstances have made it known to me. Do not look so scared. What have you to fear?"

"Oh! if you knew what a strange feeling it is to be known, to be addressed in that old way again. It agitates me, and yet—there is a sweetness in it. But how did you discover this incredible fact?"

"It is a long story, Princess. I saw you some years ago at Wolfenbützel; but it is only since yesterday that I have connected that recollection with the impression I have had all along that we were not meeting for the first time here."

"Have you indeed had that feeling, M. d'Auban? So have I; but I thought it must be fancy. Did we meet in Russia?"

"No; I left St. Petersburg before—

your Imperial Highness arrived there. It was at the Palace of Wolfenbittel that I saw you, a few months before your marriage. I was there with General Lefort."

"Is it possible! I feel as if I was dreaming. Is it really I who am talking of my own self and of my former name, and as quietly as if it was a matter of course? But how extraordinary it is that you should have suddenly recollected where you had seen me! What led to it?"

"Simonette's suspicions about some jewels, and a picture in your possession."

"Oh yes. I believe the poor girl thinks I have stolen them. I perceived that some time ago. I have been very careless in leaving such things about. I do not see any way of explaining to her how I came by them; but as I am going soon, it does not signify so much."

"Do you still think you must go, Princess? Does not my knowledge of what you are alter our relative positions. If, imploring at your feet forgiveness for the past, I promise—"

"Oh, kindest and best of friends, believe me when I say, that it is the wedded wife, not the Imperial Highness who feels herself obliged to forego what has been a blessing, but what might become a temptation. In your conduct there has been nothing but goodness and generosity. Would I could say the same of mine. My only excuse is that my destiny was so unexampled that I deemed myself bound by no ordinary rules. I fancied neither God nor man would call me to account for its driftless course. I should have let you know at once that there were reasons of every sort why we could never be any thing more than friends to each other. In those days I never looked into my own heart, or into the future at all. Bewildered by the pecu-

liarity of my fate, I felt as if every tie was broken, every link with the past at an end, save the only one which can never be dissolved—a mother's love for her child. I applied to myself the words of the Bible, 'Free amongst the dead;' for I had passed through the portals of the grave. It seemed to me as if I had survived my former self, and that ties and duties were buried in the grave on which my name is inscribed. I lived in a state that can hardly be conceived. It was like groping amongst shadows. Nothing seemed real in or around me. You raised me from that death-like despondency, that cold and silent despair. You made me understand that it was worth while to live and to struggle."

She paused as if to collect her thoughts, and then said with a melancholy smile:

"Then you know who I am?"

"Yes, Princess; and in that knowledge there is both sadness and joy."

"I ought to have told you long ago that I was married."

"Forgive me, Princess, for having dared—"

"I have nothing to forgive. On the contrary, my gratitude for what you have done for me is too deep, too vast, for words. I do not know how to express it. You showed me there could be happiness in the world, even for me. And then you taught me by your example, still more than by your words, that there is something better and higher than earthly happiness. You made me believe in the religion which bids me part from you, and which gives me the strength to do so."

"Thank God that we have met and not met in vain," d'Auban answered, with the deepest feeling. "Thank God for the sufferings of a separation more bitter than death, if we do but meet at last where the wicked cease from troubling—"

"Ay, and where the weary are at rest. But now, even now, I *am* at rest," she added with an expression of wonderful sweetness, "almost for the first time of my life; and though when I go from hence and leave you and Father Maret behind, I shall be the most lonely, perhaps, of all God's creatures, the most solitary being that ever wandered on the face of the earth seeking a spot wherein to hide and die, I feel happy—Can you understand this, M. d'Auban?"

"Yes; for it is the Christian's secret."

"But you have always had faith—you cannot perhaps quite conceive the feelings of those who once were blind and now see. You don't know what it

is to have lived half a lifetime in darkness, and then to feel the glorious light breaking in upon your soul and flooding it with sunshine!"

D'Auban was too much moved to speak for awhile, and then said, "Would it agitate or pain you, Princess, to relate to me the particulars of—"

"Of my extraordinary history—my unparalleled escape? No, I think I can go through it, and I should like to do so. I wish you to know all that has happened to me. It will be a comfort to us hereafter to have spoken quite openly to each other before we parted."

It was in the following words that Madame de Moldau told her story.

CHAPTER VIII.

MADAME DE MOLDAU'S STORY.

I will relate all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

Ezekial's Song.

And she hath wandered long and far
Beneath the light of sun and star,
Hath roamed in trouble and in grief,
Driven forward like a withered leaf,
Yea, like a ship at random blown
To distant places and unknown.

Wordsworth.

"My childhood went by like a pleasant dream. The ducal palace in which I was born, with its gay parterres, its green bowers, and the undulating hills which surround it, often rises before me like a vision of fairy-land. My sister and myself were brought up like birds in a gilded cage, and with about as much knowledge of the external world as the doves we kept to play with or the gold-fish in our mimic lakes. Our governess was an elderly

lady of rank, who had all the kindness, the placidity, and the romantic sentimentality of the Northern German character. We were, I suppose, sweet-tempered children, and scarcely a ripple marred the smooth surface of our even days. Nothing but gentleness was shown to us. Study was made interesting. We led a charmed existence, such as is depicted in fairy tales, and seeing nothing as it really is. We thought peasants were like the shep-

herds and shepherdesses made of Dresden China, and that the poor were people who lived in small houses covered with roses and called cottages. As to the world of politics and fashion, we formed our ideas of it from *Mdlle. de Scudéry's* novels. Nothing vicious or unrefined was suffered to approach us. We were taught music and morality, languages and universal benevolence. Religion was exhibited to us as a sentiment well fitted to impart elevation to the mind, and to give a relish for the beauties of nature. Virtue, we were assured, was its own reward. Oh! M. d'Auban, how well all this sounded in the morning of life, in an atmosphere of unruffled tranquillity and youthful enjoyment, in those secluded bowers where my young sister and myself wandered hand in hand, playing in the sunshine, slumbering in the shade, and resting our heads at night on the same pillow. The happiness of those early years looked and felt so like virtue. And as we grew older, the love of poetry and art, and our intense affection for each other, and our enthusiasm for the Fatherland and its legends and traditions, filled up a space left purposely vacant in our hearts and minds. No definite faith was instilled into our souls. We were instructed in the philosophy which looks on all dogmas with indifference. It was only on the map that we were permitted to distinguish between the creeds which men profess. We were to be educated to respect them all, and to believe in none till the day when diplomacy decided our fate, and our consequent adherence to one religion or another. Trained in indifference, doomed to hypocrisy! None of those who surrounded us held nobler views or a higher language than this. That dear kind old friend, who died the other day, you must have noticed yourself the tone of his mind when first you

knew him. He was our chamberlain from the time we were old enough to have a household appointed for us. Even in those days we playfully called him father, as I have done in sad and sober earnest and with good reason since. But I will not linger any longer over the remembrance of those scenes and of that time. I will not describe to you Wolfenbützel, the miniature valley, the smooth green hills, the silvery river, the old palace, the library where we used to see learned men assembling from all parts of the world—"

"I have seen it," said d'Auban. "I have seen those hills, that palace. I saw you and your fair sister, the very day (so I was told at the time) that you were about to part with her."

"Did you? It was the day after a ball."

"Yes, that very ball where I was permitted to dance with you."

"Ah! is it not strange that those who are destined to play so great a part in one another's life can be so unconsciously breathing the same air, gazing on the same scenes, speaking careless words to each other! But tell me, did you feel sorry for me then? Did you foresee what I should suffer?"

"I remember musing on the fate which awaited you, but with more of wonder than pity. It seemed to me as if the most savage of men must soften towards you, and I felt more inclined to compassionate those you were about to leave than to foresee suffering in a destiny which promised to be brilliant."

"Well, I parted with my sister, took a last farewell of the happy scenes of my childhood, received a wreath of flowers at the hands of the maidens of Wolfenbützel, and many a splendid gift from kings and from princes. I left the ducal palace and the fair valley in which it stands with a sorrowful but

not a desponding heart, for I was fulfilling a woman's and a princess's part. Forgetting my father's house, I said to myself, going forth like Rebekah to meet an unknown husband in a strange land. My sister, so said the poets of the ducal court, was to wed the Austrian eagle; I was to be the mate of the Imperial bird of the north. 'Joy to the Czarovitch's bride!' the sound rang in my ears, and my heart beat with more of hope than of fear. The title of the son of the Czar pleased my girlish fancy, and I had a romantic admiration for the great Emperor whom the philosophers and the men of letters of my country extolled as the greatest hero of the age. It was to Torgau that my father took me to meet Peter the Great and his son. I have often wondered if he had a presentiment that day of the doom of his child. I stood by his side in the chamber which had been fitted up for the first interview. The door was thrown open, and the Czar came in. I knelt at his feet and besought him to be a father to me. He spoke kindly to me. I raised my eyes to his face. It is a handsome one, as you know, but I was struck with the dead coldness of his eye, and the fearful twitch which sometimes convulsed his features. And then he presented the prince to me."

Madame de Moldau paused, hid her face in her hands, whilst tears fell like rain through her slender fingers.

"It is too much for you," exclaimed d'Auban, "too painful, too agitating to go through such a narrative—to speak of that man who was—"

"Who is my husband—the father of my child—my persecutor, my enemy, and yet—Oh! sometimes, since I have had time to look back upon the past, since in profound self-abasement I have sunk at our Lord's feet and felt my own need of mercy, I have pitied *him*, and felt that others will have to answer

for much of his guilt. Yes, that great man, his father, has dealt cruelly with a nature that was not altogether bad. He cut down the wheat with the tares in a heart as full of wild passions and as fierce as his own, but of a far different stamp. It is impossible to imagine two beings brought up in a more different manner than the Czarovitch and myself. Darkness and gloom had overshadowed his cradle; the rancour which was fostered in his soul from the earliest dawn of reason was joined to a passionate attachment to the customs, manners, religion, and language of the Muscovite nation. Early in life he had felt a burning resentment at the banishment and disgrace of his unhappy mother, the Empress Eudoxia. In the visits he obliged me to pay to 'Sister Helen,' the pale wild-looking recluse of the monastic prison of Isdal, I saw that the same passions which influenced him were eating her heart away in that horrible solitude; and what a fatal effect they had upon his character! Yet I was glad; yes, it was a relief to see that he loved her, that he loved any one. His detestation of the Empress Catherine was as vehement as his sense of his mother's wrongs."

"There is something very fearful," d'Auban said, "in a child's hatred. It is almost always founded on a secret or acknowledged consciousness of injustice, on the feeling that some great injury has been done to itself or to another. Nothing destroys so effectually youthfulness of heart."

"And the prince's hatred extended also in some measure to his father: he looked upon him as an oppressor whose will it was all but hopeless to withstand, but a sort of infatuation urged him on to the unequal struggle. There was not one subject on which the son did not abhor his father's policy. He detested foreign manners and foreign

languages, and, above all, foreign innovations. He loathed the sight of the new capital, which had risen up in a day, and taken the place of the beautiful city of his birth—the Queen of the old Muscovite empire. The Emperor's assumption of supremacy in ecclesiastical matters, and the suppression of the patriarchate, were in his eyes acts of audacious impiety. His attachment to theological studies in his youth was a singular trait in his character. He had twice written out the whole of the Bible in his own hand, and was by no means an unlearned man. But at the time of our marriage he was surrounded alternately by his drunken companions and by the clergy of the Russian Church. From a child he was taught to conspire, and urged to carry on a fruitless contest with a master mind and a despotic will which crushed him and raised him up again with contemptuous ease. He was always lifting up his arm against the giant who despised him. Defeated, but not subdued, he maddened in the conflict, and vented his rage on those within his reach. M. d'Auban, do you remember the Indian legend that Thérèse repeated to us on the eve of New Year's Day?"

"The story of Hiawatha? I noticed at the time that some parts of it seemed to strike you very much."

"It made me think of the struggle I am speaking of. Those stanzas particularly which describe how Hiawatha fought with his father, the ruler of the west wind, to avenge the wrongs of his mother, the lily of the prairie, the beautiful Wenonah. How he hurled at the giant the fragments of jutting rocks:

For his heart was hot within him,
Like a living coal his heart was;
But the ruler of the west wind
Blew the fragments backward from him
With the breathing of his nostrils,
With the tempest of his anger.

Yes, those words made me think of the Czarovitch's struggle against his iron-hearted father, who never loved him, but bore with him; and with a great patience, in which there was not one atom of feeling or of kindness, sought to make him a fit successor to his throne.

"Now, M. d'Auban, you can imagine with what feelings that rebellious spirit, that resentful son, that wild and weak young man, must have looked upon the bride which his father had chosen for him—the German bride, who could not speak one word of the Russian language, and who, with child-like imprudence, showed her aversion to many of the customs of Russia, some of them the very ones which Alexis would almost have died to uphold; who spoke with enthusiasm of the Czar; who babbled, God forgive her! of philosophy and free thinking, but loathed the sight of his vices and excesses. In those first days of marriage, of complete ignorance of all that surrounded me, how I rushed, like a fool, where angels, as the English poet said, would have feared to tread! How I unconsciously sported with the elements of future misery, and thought I could tame, by playful looks and words, the fierce nature of my husband!

"It was a few days after we had arrived at the palace at St. Petersburg, that I received my first lesson in the Greek religion; and in the evening, whilst conversing with General Apraxin, I laughed at the pains which my instructor had taken to explain to me that the Czar could not be Antichrist, as the number 666 was not to be found in his name. I saw my husband's eyes fixed upon me with a look of hatred which curdled the blood in my veins. Another time I was listening with a smile to the ridiculous account which one of the Czar's favourite French offi-

cers was giving of the discipline to which the Russian peasants subjected their wives, and of the pride which a true Muscovite woman took in the chastisements inflicted by her lord and master. The word "Barbarians" escaped my lips. The Czarovitch started up in a fury, and dealing me a heavy blow, exclaimed—"This will teach you, madame, to turn into ridicule the ancient customs of this nation."

"I turned away from him with a cry of terror, and from that day I never was free from fear in his presence. When the Czar was within reach I felt sure, of his protection, but he was seldom at St. Petersburg or at Moscow for any length of time, and I was left to the tender mercies of my husband.

"Oh what that life was; what that life became—every part of it, every moment of it! I had not one human being about me whom I could trust, except my faithful M. de Sasse—M. de Chambelle, as we called him here—who alone had been suffered to accompany me to Russia. He was of Russian parentage himself, and obtained permission to enter my household. The Countess of Konigsmark was very kind to me, and there was one other person in that great empire who also felt for the Czarovitch's wife; one whom many speak against; one whose life has been as extraordinary, though a very different one from mine; one who may have been guilty towards others, God only knows, but to me a friend to more than royal friendship true. Never, as long as life and memory last, can I forget the kindness of the Empress Catherine.

"The first day I saw her—it was just after the Czar had recognized her as his wife—my heart was very sore. Disenchantment, that sickness of the soul—a still more hopeless one than that of hope deferred—had come over me. No one had said a word of tenderness to me since I had left my home. The

Countess of Konigsmark was not yet in Russia. I had no feeling for or against the new empress. My husband detested her; but I had espoused none of his hatreds, and was more inclined towards those whom his friends opposed than those whom they favoured. When I saw her handsome face beaming upon me with the sunshiny look which, it is said, made her fortune, it seemed as if a ray of real sunshine had, for a moment, shone upon me. I suppose I must have looked very miserable. She had not yet learnt the cold reserve which royalty enforces. The womanly heart of the Lithuanian peasant warmed towards the desolate princess; she clasped me to her breast, and I felt hot tears falling on my brow. She doubtless guessed what I had already suffered, and the doom that was reserved to me; for she knew what it was to be wedded to a Romanoff—to live in fear and trembling with a hand on the lion's mane. She knew how fierce a thing was even the love of one of that race: well might she divine what their hatred must be. Our meetings were not frequent—our interviews short. The Czar, as you know, was ever travelling in and beyond his vast empire, and she was ever by his side. It was his desire, at that time, that the Czarovitch should try his hand at governing during those absences. He took care, however, to restrain his power, and to have a close watch kept over his actions. He compelled me, in spite of the ever-increasing bad treatment of the prince, to remain with him; for he knew that all my ideas coincided with his own, and were opposed to those of my husband. He hoped I should gain an influence over him. It was a vain hope.

"I will not dwell on one circumstance of my history—which, as you have resided in Russia, you probably are acquainted with. You doubtless heard it said, that Charlotte of Brunswick

had a rival in the person of a Russian slave."

"I knew it," said d'Auban, with emotion.

"It was no secret," Madame de Mol-dau went on to say. "The prince used, in my presence, to complain that the Czar had married a peasant, and that he had been compelled to wed a princess.

"Now you can understand what a fatal effect my position had upon me, as regarded religion. How I hated the creed which it had been agreed upon as a condition of my marriage that I should profess; which they wished to teach me, as if it had been a language and a science. A Protestant may be a sceptic, and yet scarcely conscious of hypocrisy in calling himself a Christian; but the Greek religion enforces observances which are a mockery if practiced without faith in them. I would not receive the sacraments of the Greek Church. The Czar did not compel me to it; but many a fearful scene I had with my husband on that account. When, on state occasions, I went to church with him, my presence only irritated his fanaticism. His religion consisted in a kind of gloomy, intense devotion to a national form of worship, identified with his prejudices, but without any influence on his heart or life. My own early impressions were too vague, too indefinite, to offer any standing-ground between the tenets which were forced upon me and the scepticism in which I took refuge. Can you wonder that I became almost an infidel?"

"It would have been strange had it been otherwise," d'Auban answered. "It is a great mercy that the principle of faith was not utterly destroyed in your soul. But it is, thank God, only wilful resistance to truth which hopelessly hardens the heart. You were guiltless of that."

"Every thing that now appears to me in another light, under another

aspect, was then distorted, as if to delude me. The prince used to take me in secret to the monastery of Isdal to see his mother and his aunt, the Princess Sophia—the so-called nuns, the unhappy recluses whose bodies were confined in this cloistered prison, whose hearts and minds were incessantly bent on ambitious projects, on intrigue and on revenge. Sister Helen's fierce denunciations of the Czar and the Empress Catherine still ring in my ears. When I am ill and weak, her face, as I used to see it, half concealed by a dark cowl, haunts me like a spectre. And the Czar's sister—her haughty silence—her commanding form—her eye bright and cold as a turquoise, watching the foreigner with a keenness which froze the blood in my veins; how I trembled when I encountered its gaze! how I shuddered when Sister Helen called me, daughter!

"I am afraid of wearying you, M. d'Auban, with the detail of my sufferings, but I want you to know what my life has been—"

"I would not lose one word, one single word, of this mournful story. It tells upon me more deeply than you think. Go on. It will be better for you to have told, and for me to have heard, that such things have happened in God's world. May He forgive those who have thus wrought with you, my—"

He stopped. The words "beloved one," were on his lips, but were checked in time. It was a hard task for that man to hear her tale of sorrow, and not pour forth in burning words the feelings of his heart.

She continued: "Every thing was a trial to me during those dreadful years. The barbarous magnificence of the court, which always in the absence, and sometimes in the presence, of the Czar was mixed up with drunken orgies and savage revelries, which

sometimes, out of caprice, the prince forced me to witness. At other times I was left in absolute neglect, and even penury.

"You have sometimes wondered at my patient endurance for a few weeks of the horrors, as you termed them, of Simon's barge, and the hut where we were first sheltered under these sunny skies. You did not know that I had once almost starved in a cold northern palace, well-nigh perished from neglect.

"At a moment's notice, a summons would come to accompany the prince to meet his father at some distant part of the empire; five or six hundred leagues were to be traversed, day and night, with scarcely any interval of repose. He detested those forced marches, and used sometimes to feign illness in order to avoid them. When we joined the court I was secure for awhile from ill-treatment, for the Czar was always kind, the Empress affectionate to me; but then I used to suffer in another away. You will understand it: something you said to me about the Czar makes me sure you will. Since my girlish days I had looked upon him with admiration—his prowess, his intellect, his energy, the immense works he had achieved, his gigantic creations, had stimulated all the enthusiasm of my nature. Perhaps my husband would not have hated me so bitterly if I had not exalted his father's name, his schemes, and his innovations with an enthusiasm, and in a way, which was gall and wormwood to him. When I was suffering the deepest humiliations, when insulted and ill-used by the Czarovitch, I used to glory that I was the Czar's daughter—that my child would be his grandson. But shadows gradually darkened these visions. A cold chill was thrown over my youthful anticipations. This did not arise from the stories my husband and his friends related against the Emperor.

I disbelieved them. The slaughter of thousands of men—the extermination of the Strelitz—I recked not of. The majesty of the crown had to be vindicated. The young Czar, in the hour of his might and of his triumph, bore the aspect of an avenging divinity in my blinded vision, and the glories of a nation rose out of the stern retributive justice of these acts.

"But when in his palace, for the first time, I saw him give way to passion, not as a sovereign, but as a savage (you used that word once; I fear it is the true one); when I saw him, with my own eyes, strike his courtiers; when with trembling horror I heard of his cutting off the head of a criminal with his own hand, and another time of his administering the knout himself to a slave—then the veil fell from my eyes—then the dream was over. The disgusting buffooneries he delighted in were also a torment to me. The cynical derisive pantomimes enacted in his presence, in which even the sacred ceremony of marriage was profaned and ridiculed; the priesthood, degraded though they might be, turned into ridicule—it was all so revolting, so debasing. No doubt he was great in what he conceived and in what he executed. No doubt he created an empire in a few years, and raised up cities and fleets even as other men put up a tent or launch a ship. But M. d'Auban, do you believe that he has founded that empire on a lasting foundation—do you think that the examples he gave will bequeath to the Russian nation those principles of morality which are the strength of a people?"

"I place no reliance," answered d'Auban, "in reforms brought about by despotic power, or in a civilization which improves the intellect and softens the manners without amending the heart and converting the soul. Did

you ever venture to express these ideas to the Czar ?”

“ Sometimes, in a general way, but you must remember, that whatever may have been right in my impressions at that time, was the result of a conscientious instinct, not of any definite principles. I was afraid of showing him how much I disliked the bad taste of his favourite amusements. Once when the Czar had given way before me to a degrading transport of passion, he said to me afterwards, ‘ Ah, it is easier to reform an empire than to reform oneself.’ There was something grand in this acknowledgment from one with whom no one on earth would have dared to find fault.”

“ Amendment would have been grander. But the fact is, he had no wish to amend. He has no faith, no principles. Ambition is his ruling passion, and what in him looks like virtue is the far-sighted policy of a wise legislator. What unmitigated suffering the atmosphere of that court must have been to a nature like yours ! The natural goodness of your heart, as well as your refined tastes, incessantly offended by the iniquities which compassed you about on every side, and at that time no firm footing on which to take your own stand in the midst of all that corruption.”

“ Yes, even those whom I had a better opinion of, and who took an interest in me, men imbued with the philosophical ideas which are gaining ground so fast in France and in Germany, but who scorned the grosser vices and coarse manners of my husband’s companions, had nothing better to recommend to me, in order to strengthen my mind and guard me against temptation, than reading Plutarch’s Lives and Montesquieu’s works. General Apraxin, Count Gagarin, and Mentzchikoff, the Emperor’s favourite, were of the number of these friends who ridiculed the

longbeards, as they called the clergy and applauded my aversion to the ceremonies of the national religion. They opened my eyes to the dangers which surrounded me. One of them informed me that every lady in my household was a spy—some in the Emperor’s and some in my husband’s interest. Another warned me never to speak in a low voice to any of my attendants, as I should be suspected of conspiring. And one day the Countess of Konigsmark (this was about two years after my marriage) brought me secretly a box containing a powerful antidote against poison, with the assurance that I might have occasion to use it ; that there was no longer any doubt that the Czarovitch intended to make away with me, in order to marry the slave Afrosina. Then fear of another sort became my daily lot ; uneasiness by day and terror by night. If ever the story of Damocles was realized in a living being’s existence, it was in mine. The torment of that continual fear became almost unbearable, and the home-sickness preyed upon my spirits with unremitting intensity. It was at once the prisoner’s and the exile’s yearning—the burthen of royalty and that of poverty also. I was penniless amidst splendour ; in debt, and deprived, at times, of the most common comforts of life. On state occasions decked out with eastern magnificence, at home in miserable penury. Often I was obliged to submit to arrangements which were intolerable to a person of even ordinary refinement. In the temporary residences which we occupied during the progresses of the court, my apartment was crowded with female slaves, both by day and by night ; and there was more vermin in some of the Muscovite palaces than in the wigwams of our poor Indians.

“ One of the peculiarities of my fate in those days was that of being, in one

sense, never alone, and continually so in another. If amongst my attendants I seemed to distinguish one from the rest—if any affection seemed to spring up between one of my ladies and myself, she was at once dismissed from my sight, exiled to Siberia, or compelled, perhaps, to marry some person of obscure station."

"An equally dreadful fate in your eyes, princess," said d'Auban, in a voice in which there was a slight shade of wounded feeling. Madame de Moldau did not seem to notice it.

"The loss was the same to me in both cases," she said. "The severity of the trial to them must have depended on the peculiarities of their own character, or the disposition of the person they were forced to wed. I envied them all, I believe—the exiles to Siberia most. I would have gone anywhere, done any thing to fly away and be at rest; and there was no rest—think of that! no rest to body, heart, or mind! One while the Czarovitch would bring his friends into my room, and hold his drunken revels there, playing at a game where the penalty consisted in swallowing large bowls of brandy at one draught. He used roughly to compel me to join in these sports, and brutally resented my ill-concealed disgust. Another while he assembled some of the Greek priests of the old school, and held with them long theological discussions in my presence. If I looked weary and distracted he called me a German infidel, and cursed the day he had married me. Now you see why I shuddered when you first spoke to me of religion. It was as if the spectre of past suffering had suddenly risen up before me, and touched me with its cold hand. One more word before I arrive at the closing scene of these long years of anguish. I have been a mother, but I have not known a mother's joy. I went through

the trying hour of a woman's life, without one word of affection or of tenderness to soothe or to support me. In a cold desolate apartment in the winter palace, more like a hall than a chamber, my son was born. The Czar and the Empress were hundreds of leagues away. There was a ceremonial to be observed which was as the laws of the Medes and Persians. No particle of it was to be infringed, but the actors in it forgot or refused to come and perform their parts; and no peasant, no slave, no criminal, was ever left in such helpless abandonment as the Czarovitch's wife. They carried away my infant. They kept him out of my sight. They left me alone shivering, shuddering, pining in solitude, conjuring up visions of terror during the long interminable nights, and nervous fancies without end. Hating to live, fearing to die, trembling at every sound, weary, weary unto death, I lay there thinking of my child in the hands of strangers, deeming that the poison I had been threatened with might be even then destined for him, and the while cannons were firing, and bells ringing, and men carousing for joy that an heir was born to the house of Romanoff. Forty days elapsed and I was at last permitted to see my son. The Czar had returned, and the Empress Catherine brought him in her arms to my bed-side. . . . I looked at the little face a long time. She was very patient with me (the Empress), she did not try to stop my weeping. She laid the baby one moment on my bosom, but it was not to stay with its mother. The Czar would not allow his son the possession of the heir to the throne. I was allowed to see him sometimes, not often. That same day I was churchied in my bed-chamber, in the presence of the Emperor and the Empress. The Patriarch performed the ceremony. I

went through it with a heart of stone. There was no thanksgiving on my lips, and no gratitude in my heart. I felt as if I was an atheist, and wished myself dead."

"Are you very tired?" anxiously asked d'Auban, frightened at Madame de Moldau's paleness, as she leant back in her chair, and closed her eyes for a moment.

"No; I was thinking of the visits I used to pay to my child at stated times only. How I used to stand by the cradle, covered with ermine, gazing on my sleeping baby, and how when he awoke he turned away crying at the sight of a stranger—of his mother. And on my return to my detested home, what wild dreams I had of escape, of freedom! What vain schemes would flit at those times across my fevered brain of a flight to my own land with my infant in my arms, of hiding in some lone wood, amidst the green hills of my native land, where for one hour I might sit with my child upon my knees, gazing into his eyes. I have heard you pity the slave whose child is sold from her bosom. Alas! I was almost as much deprived of mine as the poor negress in the slave market of New Orleans. And I dream sometimes even now of soft lips against my cheek, and little hands about my neck, which I never felt, which I shall never feel—Not even as a stranger shall I ever look again on—"

"The Czarovitch's son," said d'Auban, with a strong rising in his heart. It was almost more than he could endure to hearken to this story in silence. He was more deeply moved than she could know. What it was a relief to her to tell, it was agony to him to hear. There are records of human iniquity and human suffering which fill the soul with a burning indignation, which wring it with an intolerable pity, which make us bless God that we have never

been tempted beyond what we could bear; that we have never been, like poor Charlotte Corday, for instance, mad-dened into one of those crimes which almost look like virtue.

D'Auban was thankful that day that the wide Atlantic rolled between him and the royal miscreant who had done such deeds of shame.

"A few more words, and then you will have heard all," Madame de Moldau said, "all that I can tell of the closing scene of that long agony of fear and suffering. I was continually warned of my danger: continually received messages to put me on my guard against eating certain food, or speaking alone to some particular person. The Czarovitch himself had often uttered dark threats, in which I clearly perceived the doom I had to expect at his hands. His hatred of me seemed to grow every day more intense. At last I discovered that a conspiracy against his father was on foot. Evidence of it fell in my hands. His mother, his sister, and his friends, as well as a large number of the Greek clergy, were engaged in it. I was thrown into strange perplexities. Whatever kindness I had received in Russia was from the Czar and his consort, and my soul revolted at the idea of being implicated in my husband's unnatural conduct.

"One day I took courage. We were alone together, which was not often the case. I told him of my suspicions, my more than suspicions of the plot he was engaged in. Oh! the look of his face at that moment! I dare not fix my thoughts on it. I remember every word he said, 'that I had been his evil genius; that instead of marrying a woman he loved, he had been made to wed a pale spectre who had haunted him as the White Lady who foreshadows death in royal houses. That I hated his mother, and despised his

church, but now the crisis was come. The day of doom at hand. The destinies of Russia were at stake. Swear,' he said, 'Swear by God, that is, if indeed you believe there is a God—swear that you will be silent as the grave regarding the glorious delivery which is at hand. Do you value your life?' he said savagely, as I turned away from him without replying. 'Do you value your life?' he repeated, his eyes glowing with an expression of mingled hatred and fear.

"What has my life been that I should value it?" I cried, the strong sense of accumulated wrongs finding vent at last. 'What has my life been but a living death since I set foot in this detested land, since I became the bride of a savage. Give me back my own country, give me back my youth—'

"Your youth," he cried, 'your country. Cursed be the day when you came from it, and stood between me and the true wife of my heart, and threw the cold shade of your sneers and your unbelief over the faith of holy Russia. But by that faith I swear you shall come this very day to my mother's cell and hear from her lips the duty of a wife.' God forgive me! I was stung to the heart; I thought of what *that* woman had been, and of my patience and truth, and I murmured, 'Will *she* teach it me.' My eyes doubtless spoke the sarcasm my lips dared not utter. He felled me to the ground. I remember the agony of the blow, I remember the look of his face, I remember my own wild cry, and then nothing more; nothing for many nights and many days.

"When I recovered my senses I was, or fancied I was, alone. Lying on a small bed in a dark, low room, I saw nothing but stained whitewashed walls, and a small table on which were some bottles, and two or three common chairs. Gradually I called to mind,

with that feeble groping sense of awakening memory, *who* I was, and then with a sort of bewildered astonishment wondered *where* I was. I had spent days of misery amidst splendour and discomfort, but so poor a chamber as this I had never even looked upon. With difficulty, and feeling faint and giddy, I raised my heavy head from the pillow, and saw M. de Sasse, sitting near the stove warming his hands, and looking very ill. 'M. de Sasse,' I whispered. He started, and hurried to my side. 'Where am I? What has happened to me?'

"You are *dead*," he emphatically whispered; 'that is, everybody, and the monster who killed you, thinks you are dead.' 'Who killed me? What monster? Ah! it all came back upon me, and I gave a fearful scream. 'Hush, hush! for heaven's sake!' implored M. de Sasse. 'Nobody must know you are alive.'

"I pressed my hand on my forehead, for my thoughts were beginning again to wander. 'Is there anybody near me but you?' I said, faintly.

"The Countess of Konigsmark will be here presently. She will tell you all that has happened. Try to sleep a little again.' I closed my eyes, but I could not rest. 'Is this the world to come?' I said. 'It is like a horrid dream without a beginning or an end. It is very dark. Is it night or day? Is this life or death?' Then a nervous agitation seized me, I began to tremble and to weep. The poor old man bent over me imploring me to be silent. My sobs became loud and convulsive, and his face grew wild with apprehension. He laid a pillow on my face, and I cried out, 'Will you, too, murder me?' I shall never forget his groan as he dashed the pillow to the ground, and tore his gray hair. Poor, faithful old man, it was the sight of his grief which quieted me. I gave him my

hand and fell asleep, I believe. The next time I woke, the Countess de Konigsmark was kneeling by the bedside; when I opened my eyes they met hers. I had known her from my earliest childhood. Her son, Comte Maurice de Saxe, had been my playfellow in former days. She was one of my few friends since my marriage. Whenever she came to the court of Russia, her society was a consolation to me. During those years of misery she was the only person to whom I opened my heart. What a relief it was to see her that day! I stretched out my arms, and she folded me to her breast.

"I like this little dark room, now that you are here," I whispered. "I do not want to go away, if you will stay a little with me. And you, too," I added, turning to the old man, who was gazing wistfully at me from his seat near the stove. "Nobody cares for me in the whole world, but you two."

"My darling princess," said the countess, "do you care to live?"

"I started up in wild affright, a dreadful idea had passed through my mind. I was perhaps a prisoner condemned to death. 'What have I done? Am I to die?' I cried, 'Is the Czar dead?'"

"The tears fell fast from the countess's eyes. She shook her head: 'No, but he is far away, my princess, and the wretch who all but killed you, and believes that he did so, would not have suffered you to live if he had known that you had escaped from the effects of his ferocity. I had the absolute certainty of this. His measures were taken, and I saw but one way of saving you. We sent him word that you were dead, and spread abroad the news of your decease. A mock funeral took place, and the court followed to the grave what they supposed to be your mortal remains.'

"It is very dreadful," I said, shuddering.

"If it had not been for this stratagem your faithful servants could not have saved you. The Czarovitch has determined you shall die."

"And he thinks that I am dead?" I asked, with a strange fluttering at my heart, such as I had never known before. "But when he hears that I am alive! Ah, I am afraid! I am horribly afraid! Hide me from him. Save me from him." I clung to the countess with a desperate terror.

"We have concealed you," she said, "in this remote corner of the palace. M. de Sasse and two more of your attendants are alone in the secret."

"I am still in the palace, then?"

"Yes; but as soon as you have recovered a little strength you must fly from this country. We have all incurred a terrific responsibility who have been concerned in this transaction, for we have deceived not only the Czarovitch, but the Czar himself. The court, the nation, your own family, all Europe, have put on mourning for you. The funeral service has been performed over a figure which represented you, sweet princess; the bells have tolled in every church of the empire for the flower of Brunswick's line, for the murdered wife of the Czarovitch—for your supposed death is laid at his door."

"I am dead, then," I exclaimed, looking straight at the countess with such a wild expression that she seemed terrified. "I am dead, then," I repeated again, sitting bolt upright in my bed, and feeling as if I was the ghost of my former self. "Am I to remain always here?" I asked, glancing with a shudder at the dismantled walls and narrow windows.

"No," she softly answered. "Like a bird let loose, like a prisoner set free, you will fly away and be at rest."

'Yes, yes,' I cried, laying my head on her shoulder. 'Rest—that is what I want.' And my tears flowed without restraint.

"Under a brighter sky," she continued, 'amidst fairer scenes, you will await the time when a change of circumstances may open the way for your return.'

"Cannot I go to Vienna, to my sister, or to my own native Wolfenbuttel?"

"I immediately saw in the countess's face how much this question distressed her. 'Princess,' she said, 'this is not possible. Not only the Czarovitch, but the Czar himself, believes you are no more. If you revealed your existence, you would expose to certain death those who, at the risk of their lives, saved yours. Besides, the Prince will never suffer you to live. His emissaries would compass your death wherever you went. I have evidence that you were taking poison in your food, and that it was only the antidotes I persuaded you to use which enabled you to struggle against its effects.'

"Then I have no hope left," I cried, 'no possible refuge. It would have been better to let me die. Would that my husband's hand had dealt a heavier blow, and that the grave had really closed upon me!'

"What! is there no charm in existence?" Madame de Konigsmark exclaimed. 'Have you drained the cup of happiness during the twenty-three years you have lived? Cannot enjoyment be found in a life of retirement?'

"Drained the cup of happiness!" I bitterly cried. 'Why mock my despair? Have I known a single day of peace since I married the Czarovitch? Let me die of hunger, or call my husband's hirelings to despatch me at once, but do not drive me mad by talking to me of happiness.'

"I raved on for some time in this

state, half conscious, half delirious, I believe, fearing to fix my thoughts on any thing, and doubting whether those who had saved my life were my friends or my enemies. Madame de Konigsmark sat patiently by my side for hours together, watching, as I have since thought, every turn of my mind. She became more and more alarmed at the bold measures she had adopted, and seemed terrified lest I should refuse to disappear altogether from the world where I was known. Nothing could be more skilful or better planned than the way in which she brought me to the point. She did not say any thing more on the subject that day, but on the following morning she induced me to rise from my bed, and led me to an open window looking on a garden at the back of the palace. The sudden burst of a Russian spring—the most beautiful though the most short-lived of seasons—was imparting a wonderful beauty and sweetness to the shrubs and flowers. The sky was of the softest blue, and a southern wind fanned my cheek, reminding me of my fatherland. It awoke the wish to live. I could not now bear the idea of dying, either by violence or by poison, the effects of which had already, in spite of antidotes, begun to tell upon my health. I felt incapable of forming plans, but to get away—to escape—became now my most intense desire. At nights I was afraid of assassins. Every sound—every step—made me tremble.

"A day or two later, Madame de Konigsmark came to me in great alarm. One of the prince's favourites had been seen in the palace, conversing with the servants and making inquiries, which M. de Sasse had overheard. Rumours were afloat, she told me, that I had been killed by my husband, and my attendants, it was supposed, would undergo an examination.

"Princess, you must go this very

night,' she said. 'I will accompany you to the coast. M. de Sasse and one of your women will go with you to France. You can easily travel thence to America, where you will be perfectly safe from discovery. I have secured for you a sum of 50,000 roubles, which is by this time in Messrs. Frère's hands in Paris; and all the jewels which are your own property you must take with you. M. de Sasse will pass for your father; and if Mademoiselle Rosenkrantz should decline to leave Europe, you can easily procure in France another attendant. There is not a moment to lose. Your own life, and the lives of all concerned, are at stake.'

"The suddenness of the proposal took me by surprise. I seized her hands and cried: 'I cannot forsake my son.'

"'Alas!' she answered, 'have you enjoyed a parent's rights, or a parent's happiness? Have you been suffered to be a mother to your child? He is safe in the Czar's keeping. He can protect him better than you could. Believe me, princess, if the Czarovitch discovers you are alive, I cannot answer for your life or for mine. Do you think I should urge you to forego your position if there were any other way of saving you?'

"It was not difficult to persuade me; I had not strength to resist. In the middle of the night we descended the narrow staircase, and found a carriage waiting for us. I moved like a person in a dream. Madame de Kognismark was by my side. I do not remember having any distinct thoughts during that journey, or any feeling but that of a hunted animal pining to escape. When we came near to the coast, and I felt on my cheek the peculiar freshness of the sea air, it revived me a little; but when, by the light of the moon, I caught sight of the merchant

vessel which I was to embark in, a sense of desolation came over me. My friend wept bitterly as she gave me a parting embrace. I did not shed a tear. It seemed as if every thing within me was turned to stone. I sat down on my wretched cabin-bed; the anchor was raised and we began to move. For a long time I neither spoke nor stirred. The poor old man—once my servant, then my only protector—watched me all that day and the following night. I believe the first words I uttered were some that have often been on my lips since that time: 'Free amongst the dead!'

"Free with the freedom of God's children!" d'Auban exclaimed. "Oh, Princess! what a miracle of mercy has your life been!"

"I can see it now; but at the time all was darkness. From Hamburg, where we landed, we went to Paris, and soon afterwards to Havre de Grace, where we embarked, as I have told you before, in a vessel with eight hundred German emigrants on board. I was impatient to get away from France, always fancying myself pursued by the Prince's emissaries. Even at New Orleans I was in a constant fear of being recognized, and insisted on leaving it as soon as possible. We only stayed till M. de Sasse could dispose of my diamonds, and had placed the money at a banker's. Here I thought I should be out of the reach of travellers. You can imagine what I suffered the day those strangers came. I could not resist the wish to hear something about Russia and my poor little son. Alexander Levacheff recognized me. I saw him in private, and exacted from him an oath of secrecy. And now I have only a very few more words to say. Some persons in our position, M. d'Auban, might feel when about to part, 'It would be better that they had never met.' But I can, and from the

depths of my heart I do say: 'It has been well for me that I have met you, known you, trusted you—'

She broke down, and could not finish the sentence.

He was going to answer, but she stopped him and said, with some excitement:

"But *you*—what good have I done you? I have saddened your life by the sight of my grief, long wounded you by my silence, and now I leave you, less able perhaps to bear your solitary existence than heretofore."

He could scarcely speak. Men do not find words as easily as women, when they are deeply affected.

"It is true," he said, in an almost inaudible voice. "But, nevertheless, I am glad you came; I can say it with truth. Whatever I may have to suffer, I shall always thank God for having known you."

"Well, it may be one day, on your death-bed, perhaps, a consolation for you to think that you have acted very justly and kindly towards one who, when she came in your way, was drifting like a rudderless bark on a dark sea. The Bible says, that man is blest who could have done evil and did not do it. I might well apply to you those other words of Scripture: 'Thou art that man.' May He who knows all reward you!"

No other words passed between them. He took her hand, silently kissed it, and withdrew. The shades of evening had gradually fallen, and the moon was shining on the long thick grass of the lawn. As he looked upon the beautiful glade and the silvered landscape, he thought of the night when Thérèse had for the first time spoken to him of the white man's daughter. As long as he was listening to her he had hardly realized what it would be to live and to work on alone in that spot where for two years she had been his constant

companion and the principal object of his life. Now it seemed suddenly to come upon him. He not only knew it must, but also felt it ought to be. There was no prospect of escape from this dreaded separation. It might take place at any moment. Overpowered by his grief, he sank on a bench in the garden, and was only roused from his sad musings by Simonette's voice.

"Monsieur d'Auban!" she said, in a loud whisper.

"What do you want?" he exclaimed, starting to his feet.

"I have something to say to you. I want you to promise not to let my mistress" (it was the first time she had called her so) "leave this place before I come back. And whilst I am away, please both of you not to grieve too much."

"What—what are you talking about? What is it to me whether you go or stay?"

"Nothing, I know," answered the girl, in a voice the pathos of which might have struck him had he been less absorbed by his own grief. "But I am going away. Do not be harsh to me. Perhaps you may never see me again."

"I do not know why you go. I cannot talk to you to-night. Leave me alone."

"Will you not say a kind word to me?"

"For heaven's sake, go away!" cried d'Auban, scarcely able to command himself.

"Do not be cruel to me. I want all my strength for what I am about to do. I was within hearing just now, when madame was speaking to you. I heard what she said."

"Good heavens! and do you dare to tell me so?" exclaimed d'Auban, pale with anger. "I have had patience with you long. I have shown great

forbearance, but I shall not suffer you to remain here any longer as a spy on your mistress. She shall know of your base conduct." He walked away, greatly agitated.

"Wait—wait!" cried Simonette, in a tone of anguish, and clasping her hands together. He did not turn back. She gazed after him for a moment. "Not one look! not one word!" she murmured. "Well, be it so. In the land of the hereafter there will be no scorn, no unkindness. Oh for strength of limb, and skill, and courage! Now for the spirit of my childhood—the fearless spirit and the brave heart! God and my good angel befriend me! The travellers to Canada cannot be here before the end of next month. My father says so."

D'Auban passed a wretched night. He reproached himself bitterly for not having examined if it was indeed true that the French girl had overheard the Princess's story, and not taken measures to secure her secrecy. He felt his anger had made him imprudent. He resolved to see her the very first thing in the morning. But when, as early as was possible, he went to St. Agathe, Simonette was not to be found. Madame de Moldau and the servants supposed she had gone to the village. He went there at once, but she had not been seen. He told Thérèse she had spoken wildly the night before of going away, and observed that she did not seem surprised at her disappearance. Father Maret, to whom he communicated all that had passed the day before between him and Madame de Moldau, and also during his brief interview with Simonette, expressed his fears that she had gone to New Orleans to denounce her mistress as the possessor of stolen jewels.

"She has often spoken to me of her scruples on that subject, and, not being able," he said, "to reveal to her the

explanation of the mystery, she never seemed satisfied with my advice to let the matter rest. If, however, she did overhear the truth last night, it is scarcely credible that she can have carried out her intention. She may, however, have heard the Princess speak of her flight from Russia, and not the preceding facts—enough to confirm her suspicions, not enough to enlighten her. Would I had stopped and questioned her! The doubt is most harassing. But she cannot have started alone on a journey to New Orleans!"

"She is quite capable of doing so."

"Would it be of any use to try and overtake her?"

"If even we knew for sure which way she has gone, we have no clue as to the road she has taken, whether by the river or through the thickets. The wild attempt may be fatal to her."

"Full of risks, no doubt. But she is used to these wild journeys. I would give a great deal she had not gone, for more reasons than one."

D'Auban's heart sank within him. Letters lately received from New Orleans mentioned that orders had been sent out by the French Government to make inquiries in the colony as to the sale of jewels supposed to belong to the Imperial family of Russia, and to arrest any persons supposed to be in possession of them. If suspicions previously existing were to be renewed by Simonette's depositions, the Princess might be placed in a most embarrassing position; it might lead to inextricable difficulties; and yet there was nothing to be done but to wait—the greatest of trials under such circumstances. Father Maret hoped the travellers to Canada would soon arrive. D'Auban was compelled to wish for it also. In the mean time he tried to re-assure Madame de Moldau about Simonette's disappearance by stating she had hinted to him the day before that she had

some such intention. Though with little hope of success, he despatched men in various directions, and one in a boat for some miles down the river, to search for her. At night-fall they returned, without having discovered the least clue to the road she had taken. The next day an Indian said that a canoe, belonging to her father, which was moored a few days before in a creek some leagues below the village of St. Francis, had disappeared, which seemed to confirm the supposition that she had gone to New Orleans. D'Auban suffered intensely, from a two-fold anxiety. He reproached himself for the harsh way in which he had spoken to Simonette, and sometimes a terrible fear shot across his mind. Was it possible that she had destroyed herself! He could not but call to mind the wildness of her look and manner. He knew how ungovernable were her feelings, and how she brooded on an unkind word from any one she loved. The blood ran coldly in his veins as he remembered in what imploring accents she had called on him to stop on the night he had left her in anger, and how she had said that the task she had to perform would require all her strength. Had she gone out into the dark night driven away by his unkindness, and rushed into eternity with a mortal sin on her soul—the child whom he had instructed and baptized, and who had loved him so much and been so patient with him, though with others so fiery! The bare surmise of such a possibility made him shudder, especially if at night he caught sight of something white floating on the river—a cluster of lotus flowers, or a branch of cherry blossoms, which at a distance looked like a woman's dress. But by far the most probable supposition was, that she had gone

to denounce her mistress; and this caused him not only uneasiness as to the consequences, but the greatest pain in the thought that her affection for him had prompted this act, and that if he had had more patience and more indulgence it might have been prevented. Day after day went by and brought no tidings of the missing girl, nor of the expected travellers. Heavy rains set in, and even letters and newspapers did not reach St. Agathe and its neighbourhood. This forced inactivity was especially trying at a time when their minds were on the full stretch, and news—even bad news—would almost have seemed a relief. Since their last conversation there was much less freedom in the intercourse between d'Auban and Madame de Moldau. They were less at their ease with each other. Both were afraid of giving way to the pleasure of being together, and of saying what was passing in their minds. She was quite a prisoner in the pavillon. During those long weeks of incessant down-pouring rain, Simonette's absence obliged her to wait on herself, and she set herself with more resolution than heretofore to attend to household affairs, and to make herself independent of the services of others. She read a great deal, too, and almost exhausted d'Auban's small collection of books. He no longer spent the evenings at St. Agathe, but came there once a day to see if she had any commands. He did not venture, however, to absent himself for many hours together, for the fear never left him of Simonette's disclosures bringing about some untoward event. Week followed week, and nothing interrupted the dull, heavy monotony of the long days of rain, or brought with it any change to cheer the spirits of the dwellers in the wilderness.

CHAPTER IX.

All was ended now ; the joy, and the fear, and the sorrow ;
 All the aching of heart, the restless unsatisfied longing ;
 All the dull deep pain and constant anguish of patience.

Longfellow.

As are our hearts, our way is one,
 And cannot be divided. Strong affection
 Contends with all things, and o'ercometh all things.
 Will I not live with thee ? Will I not cheer thee ?
 Wouldst thou be lonely then ? Wouldst thou be sad ?

Joanna Baillie.

At last, one morning, the rain ceased ; the heavy clouds rolled away towards the West, and hung in heavy masses over the distant hills ; the birds began to sing ; the hares and rabbits emerged from their holes, and ran once more over the greensward. The buffaloes came trooping down from the mountains to the prairies, and a hoary bison swam across the river, and looked out upon the world from one of the flowery islands on its bosom, like a conqueror taking possession of a kingdom. A burst of glorious sunshine gladdened the expanse of wood and water around St. Agathe, and the herbage and the flowers, and living things without number, seemed to exult in its light. The brightness of that first fine morning, after weeks of incessant rain, was like the first return of joy to a heart long oppressed by grief. It felt almost like a presage of approaching change in the lives of its inhabitants. It was a Sunday morning, too, and d'Auban, who heard that Madame de Moldau had been longing to get to church, brought his horse ready saddled for her to the door of the pavillon, and prepared to conduct her in this way to the village. She consented ; he took the bridle in his hand, and the Indian servant and the Negro boy followed them on foot. They crossed the wood between them and the river, which

was sometimes traversed in a boat and sometimes by means of a series of small islets forming a kind of natural bridge, the spaces between being filled up with a network of floating verdure. Their progress was slow, for the ground, saturated with wet, was in some places almost impassable. D'Auban kept a little in advance of the horse, and tried at each step the firmness of their footing. The dripping branches over their heads rained upon them as they went along. But the scents were delicious, and the air very reviving to those who had been long confined within the house. For the first time for many weeks Madame de Moldau was in good spirits : she murmured the first words of the service of the Mass—"I shall go to the altar of God, of God who renews my youth," and a sort of youthful happiness beamed in her face ; she made nosegays of the wild flowers which her attendants plucked for her, from the banks and from the boughs through which they threaded their way. But the flowers were not to adorn the altar, nor the little party, on its way to the church, to hear Mass that day. The sound of the gong, which served as a bell, came booming over the water, but its summons was to sound in vain for them ; they were about to be stopped on their road.

D'Auban was just examining whether

it would be possible to cross the river on the island bridge, or to get the boat, when a cry reached their ears—a low, feeble, and yet piercing cry.

"Did you hear?" they all exclaimed at the same time. The boy shuddered, and said it was one of the water-spirits that had cried out. The Indian shaded her eyes with her hand, and with the long-sightedness common amongst her race, discerned a speck in the distance, which she declared was a boat.

"But it is a phantom boat!" she added. "There is no one in it, and it is coming towards us very slowly; but it advances, and against the stream." Madame de Moldau turned pale. She was prone to believe in the marvellous, and easily credited stories of ghosts and apparitions. They all gazed curiously, and then anxiously, at the little boat as it approached.

"There is somebody in it, after all!" the Indian exclaimed.

"Of course there is," said d'Auban, with a smile; "but it is a child, I think; a small creature, quite alone."

"It is Simonette," cried the Indian. "Good God! I believe it is." There was an instant of breathless silence; the eyes of all were fixed on the little boat. It ceased to advance. The oars, which could now be seen, fell with a splash into the water, and the figure of the rower disappeared.

"She has fainted!" cried d'Auban, dreadfully agitated; thought upon thought, conjecture on conjecture, crossing his mind with lightning rapidity. He hastily assisted Madame de Moldau to dismount, made her sit down on a fallen tree, gave his horse in charge to the boy, and then springing from one islet to another, and lastly swimming to the one against which the boat had drifted, he saw the lifeless form of the young girl lying at the bottom of it. There was not a shadow of colour in her face; her hands were

transparently thin, and sadly bruised within by the pressure of the oars; a dark rim under her eyes indicated starvation. If not dead, she was apparently dying. D'Auban's chest heaved, and a mist rose before his eyes. It was dreadful thus to see the creature whom he had known from a child, so full of life and spirits, to think of her dying without telling where she had been, what she had done, without hearing words of pardon, blessing, and peace. He raised her in his arms, chafed her hands, and tried to force into her mouth some drops of brandy from his flask. After a while she languidly opened her eyes, and when she saw him, a faint smile for an instant lighted up her face. She pointed to her breast, but the gleam of consciousness soon passed away, and she fell back again in a swoon.

He hesitated a moment. Then quietly laying her down again, with her head supported by a plank, he seized the oars, and vigorously pulled towards the spot where Madame de Moldau and the servants were waiting. After a rapid consultation, it was determined that he should row her and the dying girl to the opposite shore, and then return to convey the horse across. The two servants in the mean time contrived to cross the islet bridge. When they met on the other side, the boy was sent to the village to fetch assistance, in order that Simonette might be conveyed to Thérèse's hut, the nearest resting-place at hand, and to beg Father Maret to come to them as soon as possible. Madame de Moldau had thrown her cloak on some moss less saturated with wet than the long grass, and sitting down upon it, received in her arms the light form which d'Auban carefully lifted out of the boat. She pressed the wasted limbs against her bosom, striving thus to restore warmth to them. She breathed through the

cold lips, whilst he chafed the icy feet. They scarcely spoke at all during these moments of anxious watching. Madame de Moldau's tears fell on the poor girl's brow and cheeks. He gazed upon her with the most mournful feelings. Their thoughts were doubtless the same. They wondered where she had been. They prayed she might not die before the priest came.

After swallowing some more brandy, which they had poured down her throat, she revived again a little. D'Auban forced into her mouth some crumbs from a piece of bread he had in his pocket, and in an authoritative manner bade her eat them. She opened her eyes, which looked unnaturally large, and obeyed. After two or three ineffectual attempts at speaking, she succeeded in saying, as she pointed again to her breast, "Here, here, in my dress." To quiet her he nodded assent, and said he understood; upon which she closed her eyes again. He went on putting in her mouth a crumb of bread at a time.

In the mean time four men from the village were bringing a sort of rude litter, made of planks and moss; and Father Maret accompanied them. The boy had arrived at the church just as he was finishing Mass.

"She has revived a little," whispered d'Auban, "but is scarcely conscious. Feel her pulse. Will you try and speak to her now, or can we venture to carry her at once to Thérèse's hut?"

"I think you may," said the priest, counting the beats of her feeble pulse; "I fear she will not recover, but there is still some strength in the poor child. She will be much more conscious, I expect, in a little while than she is now." He drew his hand across his eyes, and sighed deeply. "If you please, I will ride your horse by the side of the litter, and watch her closely. Wait, however, for one instant." Before Simonette

was lifted from Madame de Moldau's knees he bent down and whispered: "My child, are you truly sorry for all your sins against the good God who loves you so much?"

She opened her eyes, and answered distinctly, "Yes, Father, very sorry."

"Then I will give you absolution, my child," he said, and pronounced the words which have spoken peace to so many contrite hearts since the day that our Lord said, "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven. Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world."

After she was laid on the couch of moss, covered with skins, which was Thérèse's bed, Simonette fell fast asleep for two or three hours. When she awoke she eagerly asked for d'Auban and Madame de Moldau.

"Will you not first see the chief of prayer?" said Thérèse, who feared she would exhaust all her strength in speaking to them.

"No! I must see them first; but I wish the Father to come in also."

In a few moments Madame de Moldau was sitting on one side of her, and Father Maret on the other side of the couch. D'Auban was standing at its foot, more deeply affected than any one would have thought from the stern composure of his countenance. It was by a strong effort he repressed the expression of feelings which were wringing his heart, for it was one of the tenderest that ever beat in a man's breast.

Simonette looked at him fixedly for a moment, then tried to undo the fastenings of her dress. She was too weak, and made a sign to Madame de Moldau to do it for her. Then she drew from her bosom a newspaper and a letter. The former was a number of the "Gazette de France," and an article in it was marked with black ink. She put her finger upon it, and beckoned d'Auban to come nearer. "It

was for this I went," she murmured. "That is why I wanted her to stay."

D'Auban took the paper, and moved away a little. She watched him with an eagerness which brought a faint colour into her cheek. He, on the contrary, turned as white as a sheet, as his eyes glanced over the passage in the Gazette and then at the letter she had brought. He came round to the side of the bed, and whispered to Madame de Moldau, "Will you give up your seat to me for a moment?" She looked surprised, but immediately rose, and went out of the hut with Thérèse.

D'Auban handed the newspaper and the letter to Father Maret, and then bending down his head and taking Simonette's cold hand in his—"My poor child," he said, with a faltering voice, "you have killed yourself, I fear!"

"But you will be happy," she answered, and a large tear rolled down her cheek.

"No! No! I shall always reproach myself—always feel as if I had caused your death."

"But you must not do so, because I am very glad to die, and always wished to die for you;" and turning to the priest, she said, "Father! did not our Lord say that no greater love could a man have than to lay down his life for a friend?"

"God may hear our prayers; you may yet live," d'Auban cried.

"Do not agitate her," Father Maret said; "let her tell you quietly what she wishes, and then leave her to turn all her thoughts to the next world."

The dying girl raised herself up a little, and uttered at different intervals the following sentences:—"I had resolved to denounce her, because I thought she was wicked, and I was afraid you would marry her . . . But I heard her tell you her story . . . and I saw how much you loved her . . .

and that she loved you. Hans had told me the night before that he thought the great emperor's son was dead. But he was not certain of it. . . . I was going the next day . . . to New Orleans to accuse her . . . I went, but it was to find out if she might stay . . . if you could marry her . . . and be happy. . . ."

"Oh! Simonette, my dear, dear child, it breaks my heart." . . . Father Maret made an authoritative sign to him to command his feelings, and she went on in the same faltering voice:—

"I found it was true, and they gave me that newspaper, and M. Perrier wrote for me that letter, that you might be quite sure it was true." At that moment the poor girl, with the quick perception which even then she had not lost, saw a shade of anxiety in his face. "He did not know why I asked for it," she added; "I did not tell him any thing." She paused, and then her mind seemed to wander a little. She began again: "I went very quickly down the river, but I was very long coming back . . . like what you once said about sinning and repenting, Father. . . . But I did not repent of having gone . . . I prayed all the day . . . prayed so hard . . . and rowed very hard. But not so hard at last. I had nothing to eat. . . . It was much longer than I thought from the last settlement. I ate grapes as I went along, but the rain had spoiled them . . . and I went so slowly . . . so slowly at last . . . and then when I could not row any more, I screamed." . . . "Oh! that scream," murmured d'Auban; "I shall remember it to my dying day!" "I have only one thing more to say; I had always wished to die for you. Nothing, nothing else. If I have loved you too much, I hope God will forgive me."

"He will, my child," said the priest. "If now you turn to Him with all your

heart; and oh! my child, if a human being has been so kind to you, and saved you from so many evils, as I know you think this good man has done; if he, God's creature, has done so much for you; think of what His goodness must be, of which all human goodness is but a faint reflection."

Simonette raised her eyes to heaven—her lips silently moved—a smile of greater sweetness than any that had ever lighted up her face before passed over it, and then she said in a low voice: "Father! during those long weary days, and the dark solitary nights, on the river, God was very good to me, and made me love Him more than any one on earth. I am very glad to go to Him. . . . God of my heart, and my portion for ever!" She pressed the crucifix to her breast, and remained silent.

Father Maret made a sign to d'Auban to withdraw. In a little while he called him back, and Madame de Moldau and Thérèse and the servants knelt with him round the bed. The last sacraments were administered, and they all joined in the prayers for the dying. When Father Maret uttered the words "Go forth Christian soul!" a faint struggle was visible in the pallid face—a faint sigh was breathed, and then the heart that had throbbed so wildly ceased to beat. "Requiescat in pace!" said the priest, and d'Auban hid his face in the bed of moss, and wept like a child by the corpse of the poor girl who had loved him "not wisely, but too well."

There was something shrinking and sensitive in Madame de Moldau's disposition, which made her peculiarly susceptible of painful impressions. It is a mistake to suppose that those who are harshly and unjustly treated, always or even generally, become callous to such treatment; that after having met with cruelty they are not sensible of slight unkindnesses. This is so far

from being the case, that with regard to children who for years have had blows and curses for their daily portion, it is observed that tenderness and gentleness are peculiarly needed, in order to avoid checking the gradual return to confidence, and the expanding of affection in their young hearts. The new joy of being loved is easily extinguished. They are so fearful of losing it, that a cold look or word from one who for the first time in their lives has fondled and caressed them, seems to wound them quite in a different manner from those on whom the sunshine of affection has beamed from their earliest infancy. The heart, when sore with a heavy affliction, winces at every touch, and when, on the contrary, great happiness fills it, the least casual pleasure is sensibly felt. The slow admittance of pleasurable feelings in the case of those who grind amidst the stern necessities and iron facts of life, is one of the most affecting things noticed in dealing with the poor. It is akin to that gratitude of theirs which Wordsworth said "so often left him grieving."

Madame de Moldau had experienced a slight feeling, not of annoyance or displeasure, but simply of depression, at the manner in which d'Auban appeared to have lost all thought of her during the whole time of poor Simonette's dying hours. This was selfish, heartless some people would say; and there is no doubt that any engrossing affection, if it is not carefully watched, is apt to make us selfish and unfeeling. Conscience, reason and prayer, banish these bad first thoughts more or less speedily in those under the influence of a higher principle; but the emotion which precedes reflection often marks the danger attending a too passionate attachment; and when it is one which ought to be subdued and renounced—which has not the least right to look for a return or to expect consideration—

sharp is the pang caused by any symptoms of neglect or indifference. Madame de Moldau did not know the bitter self-reproach which was affecting d'Auban's heart; she did not know that Simonette had lovingly thrown away her life for the sake of bringing him tidings which would change the whole aspect of his destiny and of her own. But she saw him hanging over her death-bed with irrepressible emotion, his eyes full of tears—his soul moved to its very depths. It did so happen, that when he rose from the side of the dead, he had abruptly left the hut, as if unable to command himself. He did feel at that moment as if he could not look at her. The new hope which had come to him was so mingled with thoughts of the closing scene, and of the sacrifice of Simonette's young life, that it seemed unnatural—almost painful—to dwell upon it, and so he passed by her without speaking to her, and went straight into the church.

Meanwhile she suffered intensely. True, she had made up her mind to separate from him, to accept a lonely existence in a distant country, even perhaps never to set eyes upon him again; but to think he had not really cared for her—cared perhaps for another person under her roof—the thought stabbed her to the heart, even as if no unreal weapon had inflicted the wound. Her brow flushed with a woman's resentment. The pride of a royal line—the German ancestral pride latent within her, burst forth in that hour with a vehemence which took her by surprise. Had Charlotte of Brunswick, the wife of the Czarovitch, the daughter of princes, the sister of queens and kings, been made the object of a momentary caprice? Had she tacitly owned affection for a man who had loved a base-born Quadroon? The fear was maddening?

Yes! madness lies that way. An injury received—a wrong suffered at the hands of one loved and trusted, may well unsettle reason on its throne—the mere suspicion of it makes strange havoc in the brain, when we rest on the wretched pinnacle we raise for ourselves—the false Gods of our worship. There is but one remedy for that parching fever of the soul. To bow down lower than men would thrust us. To fall down at His feet who knelt at the feet of Peter and even of Judas—who would have knelt at our feet had we been there. This is the thought that leaves no room for pride, scarcely for indignation, as far as we are ourselves concerned. It had been often set before Madame de Moldau, and its remembrance soon caused a reaction in her feelings. What was she, poor worm of earth, that she should resent neglect? What had she done to deserve affection? How should she dare to suspect the sincerity of so true a heart—so noble a character? And if, as she had sometimes thought, that poor girl loved him, had she not a better right to do so than herself, a wedded wife, who ought never to have admitted this affection into her heart? And did not her untimely death claim from him a more than common pity? The cold dull hardness in her bosom gave way to tenderness. The sweetness of humiliation, the joy of the true penitent, took its place. She went into the chamber of death, and remained there till Father Maret came to request her to follow him to his house.

D'Auban was there. He went up to her as she entered, and seemed about to speak, but, as if unable to do so, he whispered to the Father: "I cannot break it to her; tell her yourself." Then, holding her hand in both his, he said, with much feeling—"Princess! thus much let me say before I go; whatever may be your wishes or your commands,

my time, my actions, and my life, are at your disposal."

She looked up in astonishment, and when he had left the room turned to Father Maret, and asked, "What does he mean? What has happened?"

"He alludes, Princess, to a great event, the news of which has just reached us; one that touches you nearly." He paused a minute, and then quietly added, "The Czarovitch is dead." She did not start, or faint, or weep. For several minutes she sat still, not knowing what was the kind of feeling which tightened her heart, oppressed her brain, and kept her silent and motionless as a statue.

"Dead!" she slowly repeated. "How did he die?"

"It is a mournful story," the Father answered. "The Prince came back to Russia, as you know, on a promise of pardon; but fresh accusations were brought against him since his return. He was tried, and found guilty."

"Oh! do not tell me that his father put him to death."

"The account given in this paper from Russian sources is, that his sentence was read to him, and that the shock proved fatal to a constitution weakened by excesses. It says he fell ill, and never rallied again. It also mentions that he received the last sacraments before the whole court; that he requested to see his father before his death, and that they embraced with many tears. The French editor, however, throws great doubts on the correctness of this statement, and hints at the prince having been poisoned by his father."

"Oh! surely this must be false. I cannot, cannot believe it. . . . Is it not too horrible to be true? And yet, after what I have seen. . . . Oh! why did I ever belong to them? Why was my fate cast with theirs?"

"You are not obliged; you had bet-

ter not, Princess, form a judgment on these conflicting statements. Leave the doubtful, the dreadful past in God's hands. Think of it only when you pray, that your husband's soul may find mercy, and that this terrible event may have changed his father's heart.

"He may have repented, poor Prince! He had some kind of faith, and he loved his mother. If he had had a wife who had prayed for him then. . . . Oh! my God, forgive me." She sank down on her knees—then suddenly lifting up her head, she asked, "How did this news come? Is it certainly true?"

"Perfectly certain—the poor girl who brought the newspaper from New Orleans also brought a letter from M. Perrier to M. d'Auban, which places the matter beyond all doubt. Will you read it, Princess?" "Read it to me," she answered, her eyes filling with tears. "I cannot see." Father Maret read as follows:—

"MY DEAR M. D'AUBAN,—

"A young woman, who says she is your servant, has made a very earnest request that I should state to you in writing that the news contained in the last number of the '*Gazette de France*,' relative to the death of the Czarovitch of Russia, is perfectly authentic. It is most undoubtedly so; notice of this Prince's demise has been received at the Court of France, and their Majesties have gone into mourning. I do not know on what account, nor would your servant tell me why, this intelligence is important to you. I conjecture that it may have some connection with a robbery of jewels belonging to the late Prince's wife, which are said to have been sold in the colony. If any information on that subject should come to your notice, I should feel obliged to you to let me know of it. But I am inclined to believe it an idle story. Wishing

you every happiness, I remain, my dear M. d'Auban,

"Your attached and obedient servant,
PERRIER."

"Poor Simonette!" exclaimed Madame de Moldau. "These are then the papers she gave M. d'Auban. This was what she was pointing to when she touched her breast, whilst lying half unconscious on my knees. But what, reverend father, do you suppose was exactly her object?"

Madame de Moldau blushed deeply as she put this question, and as Father Maret hesitated a little before answering it, she said: "Had she, as M. d'Auban thought, overheard our conversation on the night before she went away? Do you think she knew who I am?"

"No doubt that she did, Princess. She told us that she had intended to go to New Orleans to accuse you of possessing stolen jewels, but that having discovered who you are, she went, but with a different purpose. She wished to find out if you were free, thinking, I suppose, that this knowledge might greatly influence yours and M. d'Auban's fate."

"Poor girl, poor Simonette, it was for his sake, then; but I do not see, I do not know, that it can make any difference. . . . I thought she had left me in anger. Thank God, I did not resent it; but how little did I think . . . Good heavens, if it was for him, Father; for his sake, she did this; what a wonderful instance of devoted disinterested affection! How mean, how selfish my own feelings seem to me, when I think of her. Even now I cannot help thinking of myself, of the change in my fate, what it might lead to, what it might involve . . . There are so many obstacles besides the one now so suddenly, so terribly removed. . . . Poor girl, it would be sad if she had sacrificed herself in vain. My mind

is so confused, I scarcely know what I think or say."

"And you should not try to think, or to resolve, whilst you are so much agitated. The Bible says, 'Do not make haste in time of clouds.'"

"But I do not feel as if I should ever be calm again, and I hate myself for thinking of any thing to-day but the death of that poor prince—he hated me, but he was the father of my child. My child! my poor forsaken child. I should never have left him. I did not know what I was doing. O! reverend father, was it not unnatural, horrible, in a mother to leave her child! . . ."

"You were, in a certain sense, compelled to do so, Princess. Your life was threatened, and it is very probable that by your flight you saved your husband from the commission of a crime."

"True; God bless you for those words—for reminding me of that." She was silent for a moment, and then said, in an excited manner: "I cannot see or speak to M. d'Auban for some days. I must be alone. I want to see no one but you and Thérèse. I don't want to go back to St. Agathe just now."

"You would, I think, find it a comfort to remain here with Thérèse, and near the church. M. d'Auban intends, immediately after the funeral, to go and meet Simon, who must be by this time on his way back from the Arkansas. He wishes to tell him himself of his daughter's death."

"Simonette dead!" murmured Madame de Moldau; "dead! a creature so full of life and spirits—lying dead in that next hut! all over for her, save the great realities of another world. She ought not to have died in vain. How passionately she must have wished him to be happy! but perhaps I ought still to go."

"Princess, that is a question you

cannot decide in a moment. Time and prayer must help you to it."

"And you, too, will help me?"

"Certainly, as far as I can. I will beg of our Lord to give you grace to resolve aright. I feel very much for you, my child." These words were said most kindly, and went to the poor lonely woman's heart, who, at this turning-point in her life, had not a friend or a relative to take counsel with, and who dreaded perplexity beyond all other trials. There are natures to whom it is the only intolerable suffering; that have a strong passive power of endurance under inevitable evils, but to whom the responsibility of a decision is perfect anguish. In struggles between duty and inclination, between conscience and temptation, the lines are clearly defined, and each successive effort is a pledge of victory. It is like scaling a steep ascent in the free air and broad sunshine. But where conflicting duties, as well as conflicting feelings, are in question, and the mind cannot resolve between them, the depressing effect on the mind is akin to that of walking in a thick fog at night amidst precipices. Under such circumstances, a child's impulse would be to sit down and cry. There was something childlike in Madame de Moldau's character, in spite of its latent energy. It did her good to be pitied. Father Maret's sympathy seemed to loosen the tight cord which bound her heart, and she sat down in Thérèse's little garden, and after a good fit of weeping, felt comforted and relieved.

Over and over again she read and mused over the details of the Czaro-vitch's death, which the French Gazette contained. A deep compassion filled her soul for the unhappy man who had been her husband. Woman-like, she resented his wrongs, and shed tears over his fate. Whilst reading the eloquent words with which

the bishops of the Greek church had sought to obtain mercy from him at his father's hands, she felt it had been wrong to despise them as she had done in former days, and that the Christian faith, however obscured, and a Christian church, however fallen, can speak in nobler accents and find words of greater power than cold unbelief can ever utter. Her heart softened towards those Greek priests she had once hated, and she said, "God bless them for this thing which they have done."

In one part of Thérèse's cabin that night was reposing the lifeless form of the girl who had just died, and divided from it only by a thin partition rested the woman in whose fate so great a change had taken place. On each pale face the moon was shedding its light. Cold and motionless was the bosom of the first, whilst that of the other was heaving like a child's that has cried itself to sleep. For the girl of seventeen all was over on earth. For the widowed wife life was opening new vistas; dream after dream filled her brain with visions of grief and joy, in wild confusion blent. Words akin to those dreams fell from her lips—

And as the swift thoughts crossed her soul,
Like visions in a cloud,
In the still chamber of the dead
The dreamer spake aloud.

Thérèse did not sleep. She was accustomed to long night watches, and she knelt and prayed between the two sleepers. She did not know the secrets of those two destinies, but she said the "De profundis" for the one, the "Memorare" for the other. "May she rest in peace," for the dead; "May she live for God," for the living.

When the morning dawned, and the rays of the rising sun began to light up the silent hut, she laid down by Madame de Moldau, and took a few mo-

ments' repose. Once she was roused by hearing her murmur some words of the Bible; they were these: "Am I not better to thee than ten sons?"

D'Auban had attended the service for poor Simonette's burial. He had stood on one side of the grave and Madame de Moldau on the other. Their eyes had not met whilst the solemn rites were performed. It was only when the crowd had dispersed—for settlers and natives had attended in great numbers the funeral of Simon's daughter—that he came up to her where she was still standing, in the cemetery, and placed a letter in her hands. She took it in silence, and held out her hand to him. He kissed it, and withdrew to prepare for his departure. His letter was as follows:—

"MADAME: I have a few words to say, which I feel it easier to write than to speak. Your fate is changed, and so are my duties towards you. From the moment I became acquainted with your name and rank, that I knew you to be a princess and a wife, I felt the deepest regret that by my rashness and presumption I had put it out of my power to devote to you as a servant a life which I would fain have spent in your service; that I had made it impossible for you to accept of the services which, under other circumstances, I might have been permitted to render to one so infinitely above me in rank, as well as in merit. Whilst you were forced to hide your name, whilst the unhappy prince, your husband, was alive, I felt constrained to see you depart from hence alone and unprotected, and dared not even offer to accompany you to the place you had fixed upon for your future residence. I will not dwell upon what I suffered; it was one of those efforts at passive endurance more trying than the most painful exertions.

"Now, as I said before, a great change has taken place in your position, and I venture to lay at your feet whatever God has given me of strength and energy, to be spent, and if it please Him, consumed in helping you to reassume the position which belongs to your Imperial Highness, both by birth and marriage, and replacing you on the steps of the throne which your son is one day to occupy. I have no ties or duties which bind me in an absolute manner to any spot on earth. If you will deign, Princess, to accept me as your servant; if you will allow me to act by you as our poor friend would have done had he yet been alive, I will accompany you to Europe, and only leave you the day when, amidst your relatives, and the friends of your youth, you will stand once more acknowledged by them all as their lost princess.

"I implore you to trust me. I dare not promise to forget the past, but I can and do promise that no word shall ever pass my lips unbecoming a servant. I would not ask to live near you at Court, and be your servant there; but whilst trials and difficulties beset you, whilst you are friendless and alone, grant me this favour. Let me be your servant. I feel nearly as old as poor M. de Chambeile. The last few months have seemed to add many years to my age. Let me be your guardian. I could not brook a refusal. It would wound me to the heart. I know there will be many difficulties to overcome, and a long time may elapse before your identity is acknowledged, but that it will be so at last I feel no doubt of; and if it is granted to me to see you happy—I was going to say I could be happy to part with you for ever, but I cannot, dare not, write such an untruth. I do not want to be happy myself; I want to see you happy. That I can and do say from the depths of my heart. Forgive me, Princess, if this letter ends

in a less formal manner than it began. It need not make you distrust the promise I have made. I have not courage to write it over again, so I send it just as it is, with the most fervent blessings and prayers that you may indeed be happy, and that I may help you to be so.

"Your Imperial Highness's

"Devoted servant,

"HENRI D'AUBAN."

This letter had been written the night before it was given to Madame de Moldau. Perhaps the tone of it might have been a little different had it been composed after the brief meeting in the cemetery; for as he looked at her, as he kissed her hand, as he felt its silent pressure, hope, in spite of himself, sprung up in his heart and made it bound. Princess as she was, the woman he loved was now free. Men's customs, their habits, perhaps their laws, stood between him and her, but not God's laws, not His commandments. The words she had once said came back to his mind: "It is the wedded wife, not the Imperial Highness, who rejected your love." And as he gazed at the solitary beautiful landscape, at the boundless plain and far-stretching forests on every side, he thought how insignificant were the thoughts of men in that solitude, how impotent their judgments. If she should choose to abandon altogether the old world and accept a new destiny in the land where their lot was now cast, might they not now, with safe consciences and pure hearts, be all in all to each other! But he had resolution enough to give her the letter he had written under a stern sense of duty, and not to add a word to diminish its effect. He went on his way through the forests and the deserts, and encountered the usual difficulties belonging to such journeys. But bodily

exercise relieves activity of mind, and he was glad to have something to direct his thoughts from their too absorbing preoccupation. Six days after his departure he met Simon, and went through the painful task of breaking to him his daughter's death. The bargeman was much afflicted by this sudden blow, but he did not care quite so much for his child since she had ceased to be his companion and plaything. D'Auban gave him a sum of money in recompense for Simonette's services to Madame de Moldau, thinking at the same time how little money could repay what the poor girl had done for them. Simon was not indeed consoled, but somewhat cheered, by the sight of the gold; for the ruling passion is strong in grief as well as in death. Then d'Auban retraced his steps, and stopped that night at the little Mission of St. Louis. He reached it just as the evening service was going on. The scene was precisely similar to the one so beautifully described in Longfellow's poem:

Behind a spur of the mountains,
Just as the sun went down, was heard a
murmur of voices,
And in a meadow green and broad, by the
bank of a river,
Rose the tents of the Christians—the tents
of the Jesuits' mission.
Under a towering oak, that stood in the
midst of the village,
Knelt the Black Robe chief with his children;
a crucifix, fastened
High on the trunk of the tree, and over-
shadowed by grape vines,
Looked with its agonized face on the multi-
tude kneeling beneath it.
This was their rural chapel—aloft, through
the intricate arches
Of its aerial roof, arose the chant of their
vespers,
Mingling its notes with the soft susurrus and
sighs of its branches.

The traveller knelt down and joined in the devotions of the Indian congrega-

tion, and after they were ended introduced himself to the priest, who invited him to spend the night in his hut. The pleasure of seeing a Frenchman, and conversing in his native language—a rare one in that locality, beamed in the face of the good father. “I have been very fortunate this week,” he said; “for several months past I had had no visitors, but on Tuesday quite a large party of travellers, including two European ladies, halted here on their way to Montreal. We had some difficulty in putting them all up for the night. I managed to accommodate the two priests and one of the gentlemen, the others slept in the school-master’s hut, and the two ladies in the schoolroom. It was luckily fine weather, and they were not very uncomfortable, and I had not had such a treat for a long time. Three masses were said the next morning in our poor little chapel. It was the first time such a thing had happened. And they were all such kind and pleasant people.”

Little did the good father guess, as he good-humouredly talked on in this manner, what anguish he was causing his guest, who, in a voice which any one who had known him would have thought strangely altered, inquired the names of these travellers.

“Father Poisson and Father Roussel, and M. and Madame Latour, and M. Maçon. I did not catch the name of the other lady.”

“Was she tall and fair?”

“Yes, I should say so—tall, certainly.”

“Young and pale?”

“Rather pale, I think; but about ladies’ ages I never know—yes, I suppose she was quite young. Are you acquainted with them, my dear sir?”

“I know some of them by name,”

d’Auban answered, pushing away the

dish which had been set before him; he could not have swallowed a morsel. There are circumstances which heighten singularly the acuteness of certain trials. He knew that he might still have to part from Madame de Moldau, though during the last few days hope had been gradually gaining ground in his mind; but he had never anticipated that such a separation would take place in an unexpected and abrupt manner. That she should leave St. Agathe during his absence, and that he should thus lose the opportunity of speaking a few parting words to her, was more than he could endure; it almost upset his fortitude. The Father noticed his paleness and want of appetite, and the way in which he unconsciously pressed his hand against his temples, as if to still their throbbing. “I am sure you have a bad headache,” he kindly said; “come out into the air and take a stroll—it is a beautiful night.”

D’Auban accepted the proposal, for the hut was very close. The fresh air did him good. He took off his hat, to let it blow on his forehead. He tried to think that the second lady of the party might not, after all, be Madame de Moldau, though the others were the people she was to travel with; and only one lady had been mentioned by Father Maret’s correspondent.

As they passed a small cluster of cabins the priest pointed to one of them, and said, “Ah! there is the bedroom of our ladies. They had to sleep on mats with a bundle of moss for a pillow.”

The door was open. D’Auban stood on the threshold, and gazing into it, thought: “Did she indeed sleep in this spot two days ago, worn out by fatigue and sorrow, or did she lie awake thinking of the past and of the future, without a friend near her?”

Or is she now glad to escape from that love I could not conceal, and which perhaps frightens her away? Perhaps she is seeking other assistance than mine to recover her position. She will not, I suppose, accept the services of one who has dared to love her. It would not have been wrong, however, to wait for my return. . . . She might have spared me this suffering." Absorbed in these musings he was forgetting his companion, and was only roused by hearing him exclaim, "Ah! what have we here! See, one of those poor ladies has dropped her neck-handkerchief. It will be no easy matter to restore it, seeing we have no postal service in this part of the world!" D'Auban till that moment had had a lingering hope that Madame de Moldau had not after all been one of the ladies of that party; but now he could no longer have a doubt on the subject. The blue and black silk handkerchief in the hands of the priest was the very one he had often and often seen round her neck. He mechanically stretched out his hand for it. It was one of those little things connected with the remembrance of past happiness which affect the heart so deeply.

When the evenings grew chilly after hot sunny days, or when in the boat or the sledge on bright frosty nights, he used to remind her to tie her handkerchief round her throat—her white, slender, swan-like throat. It had a trick of slipping off. He saw her in fancy smiling as she was wont to do, on these occasions. So vivid was this recollection that a deep sigh burst from him.

"You are suffering very much; I am certain of it," said his companion; "you must let me prescribe for you; like most missionaries, I am somewhat of a physician."

D'Auban seized his hand.

"I am not ill, my dear father, but it

is true I am suffering. Pray for me, and forgive my strange and ungracious conduct."

"Would it be a comfort to you to tell me your grief?"

"I could not speak of it without relating too long a story for me to tell or for you to hear to-night. But thus much I will say: missing those travelers who were here three days ago has been a terrible blow to me. One of them, the one to whom this handkerchief belonged, is very dear to me; and I shall probably never see her again."

"But could you not overtake them, my dear friend? women cannot travel fast."

"Do you know what road they were to take?"

"The usual one to Canada; but, to be sure, in a country like this it would be ten chances to one that you hit on the same track."

This was obvious; and d'Auban, who for one minute had been tempted to catch at the suggestion, remembered that there were other reasons against it. His absence from the concessions even for a week had been a risk, and a prolonged one might affect not only his own but likewise Madame de Moldau's interests; and she might be more than ever in want of means, if she intended to return to Europe. It might also have been her wish by this sudden departure to avoid the pain or the embarrassment of a parting interview.

Observing his agitation, the priest said, in a grave and compassionate manner, "Perhaps you ought not to follow her?"

"No, father; it would not be wrong, but it would be madness. I must, on the contrary, return as speedily as possible to my habitation. If you have any thing to write to Father Maret I will take charge of it."

"You know him, then?" said the priest, with a look of pleasure.

"He is my most intimate friend."

"Ah! well, God bless you. It is a good thing in sorrow to have a friend, and a friend like him. I will spend the night in writing, and then you can use my bed; that will suit us both."

D'Auban remonstrated against this arrangement, but the good missionary insisted on carrying it out. He took a few hours' broken and restless sleep on the poor couch, whilst his host sat writing on an old trunk, which served at once as a chest and a table.

The first sight of St. Agathe was almost more than d'Auban could bear. He had, during his homeward journey, schooled himself to endure with fortitude his return to the place which had been her abode, and in which every object was so intimately connected with her presence, that he could hardly picture it to himself without her. But when, as he came out from the forest into the glade, it rose before him in all its cheerful beauty, so striking amidst the grand and gloomy scenery around it, his courage almost failed. But he determined to master the pain and to look that suffering in the face. Riding up to the door he gazed on the park, the verandah, the window of *her* room, and then breathing a deep sigh, turned away, saying to himself, "The worst is over now," and rode on to his own house. When he entered, he was looking so worn and ill, that his servant Antoine was quite frightened. He brought him some wine, and anxiously asked him if he had not met with some accident. He said no; and asked if any letter had arrived during his absence.

"No, not one, sir," Antoine answered.

D'Auban thought Madame de Moldau would at least have written to him. A feeling of resentment rose in his breast, which made him better able to conceal

his feelings. He would not for the world have uttered her name, though he would have wished to know the exact day on which she had left. Wounded pride is a powerful stimulant; it gives a false kind of strength even whilst it embitters a wound.

He sent for his overseer and looked over his accounts. Both the overseer and Antoine observed the burning heat of his hands, and that he often shivered that evening. His face was alternately pale and flushed. They felt anxious about him, and well they might; for he had caught the fever of the country whilst taking a few hours' rest in a hut by the river-side on the last day of his journey. The sufferings he had gone through had predisposed him to it. In a few hours he was so ill that Father Maret was sent for. For two or three days he was alarmingly ill; and it was evident that he was suffering in mind as well as in body. There was in his character—and it was perhaps the only fault that others noticed in him—a rigidity which made him take extreme resolutions, and act up to them with a firmness bordering on obstinacy. From the moment he found that Madame de Moldau had left St. Agathe he determined to suppress in himself, by a strong effort of the will, all feelings more tender or affectionate than those which it was befitting for him to entertain towards a person in her position. He would work for her and watch over her interests more closely than ever. If she should ever call him to her assistance he would obey her summons and never utter a word of complaint; but, except when business made it necessary, he would never pronounce her name or allude to their former intimacy. And accordingly when Father Maret visited him on his sick bed he did not allude to her departure, and abruptly changed the subject whenever he seemed about to speak of her. At the end of the

fourth day the fever abated, but it promised to take an intermittent form, and in the intervals his weakness was great.

Antoine watched him most carefully, and when Thérèse offered to come and nurse him, he somewhat scornfully rejected her proposal. "These women," he said one evening to his master, "are always fancying that nobody can take care of sick people but themselves. And they are often dreadfully in the way. Ministering angels I have heard them called; very troublesome angels they sometimes are. The second evening after Monsieur came home, and when he was so ill, and I wanted to keep the house quiet, there was Madame de Moldau coming at the door and wanting every minute to know. . . ."

D'Auban started up, the blood rushing violently in his face.

"What did you say?" he asked in a voice, the agitation of which made it sound fierce. "Has not Madame de Moldau left St. Agathe?"

"Oh dear, no! She was here this morning to hear how Monsieur was, and if we wanted anything. I did not mean to speak unkindly of her, poor lady! She did not make much disturbance after all, and took off her shoes not to make a noise on the boards."

A joy too great, too deep for words, filled the heart which had so much suffered. It was visible on the face, audible in the voice of the sick man. Antoine noticed the change. He had some vague idea of what was going on in his master's mind. Perhaps his mention of the Lady of St. Agathe had not been quite accidental. He went on brushing a coat with his face averted from him.

"I should not be surprised," he said, "if she were to be here again this afternoon. I told her we had no more lemons, and she said she would bring or send some. As Monsieur is up to-day,

perhaps he would like to see Madame, if she comes herself with them?"

"Of course, if . . . if she should wish. . . But I ought to go myself to St. Agathe. I think I could."

"You! oh, that's a good joke! Father Maret charged me not to let you stir out of the house to-day. Tomorrow, perhaps, you may take a little walk."

From the window near which he was sitting, in less than an hour, d'Auban saw Madame de Moldau crossing the glade, and approaching his house. It was a moment of unspeakable happiness. She was still all she had ever been to him. She had not spurned his offers, or sought other protection than his. This was enough. He did not at that moment care for any thing else. Their eyes met as she passed under the window, and in another moment she was in the room.

"Sit down, dear Monsieur d'Auban," were her first words, as he rose to greet her. "Sit down, or I shall go away."

"No! don't go away," he said, sinking back into the arm-chair, for he had not strength enough to stand. "For some days I thought you were gone—gone for ever!"

"Did you? O why?"

He drew her silk handkerchief from his bosom. "I found this in a hut a hundred miles off, where the people you were to have travelled with slept a few nights ago. And there was a lady with them besides Madame Latour. . ."

"O, Monsieur d'Auban, how grieved I am about that handkerchief. It must, indeed, have misled you. What a strange coincidence that you should have found it! I gave it to Mademoiselle La Marche; she was the second lady of the party. They all stopped here for a day. Had it been a fortnight ago I should now have been with them."

"What made me so miserable was

the thought that you did not trust me. That you rejected my offer of accompanying you to Europe."

"I am not going back to Europe," she said in a low voice.

"But, ought you not?" he answered, trying to speak calmly. "Ought you not to resume your rank and your position—to return to your son? Is it not, perhaps, your duty to do so?" he asked, with a beating heart.

"As to rank and position, to forego them for ever would be my greatest desire. But it would no doubt be my duty to return to my poor child, if I could do so—even at the cost of the greatest misery to myself—even though convinced that the same heartless etiquette which separated me from him as an infant would still keep us apart if I went back. It would certainly have been right to make the attempt, and if spurned and rejected by my own kindred. . . ." She stopped and held out her hand to him. "You would not have forsaken me."

"Never! as long as I live. If you were on a throne you would never see me, but you would know there was a faithful heart near you; and if driven from it, O how gladly would it welcome you!"

"I know it—I never doubted it—and if it had been possible, under your protection, I would have tried to make my way to Russia, and to take my place again near my son. But I forget if I told you that, before I left St. Petersburg, the Comtesse de Konigsmark made me solemnly promise that, as long as the Czar lived, I should not reveal to any one the secret of my existence. She knew that the emperor, even if he chose to acknowledge and receive me, which is doubtful, would never forgive those who had deceived him, even though it was to save my life. My attendants especially would be liable to his vengeance. She had

interests I know which made her very fearful of incurring his displeasure. It would not, at all events, be possible for me to act in this matter without her knowledge and approval. I have written to her, and must be guided by her answer. I may hear from her any day. I cannot but think she will write to me at such a decisive moment."

"And, in the mean time, you will stay here?"

"Yes. In any case till I get her letter."

"And if you decide not to return to Europe, what will you do?"

She coloured deeply. "Had we not better put off speaking of that till I see my way clearly before me? I need not tell you. . ." "Yes," he exclaimed, "I need that you should tell me, I need to know that, if we part. . ." "If we part, M. d'Auban, I shall be making the greatest sacrifice a woman can make to duty and to her child." This was said with an emotion which could leave no doubt in his mind as to the nature and strength of her feelings towards him. From that moment perfect confidence was established between them. Each tried to keep up the other's courage. Both looked with anxiety for the arrival of the expected letters. One packet arrived, but it had been delayed on its way, and contained nothing of particular interest. At last, one afternoon, as they were busy planting some creepers round the stump of an old tree, each thinking, without saying it, that they might not stay to see them grow, a boatman came up to the house, and delivered a letter into Madame de Moldau's hand. She sat down and broke the seals and untied the strings with a nervous trepidation which made her long about it. He continued to prune the newly-planted shoots in an unsparing manner. He did not venture to watch her face, but the sound of a sob made him turn

round. She was crying very bitterly.

"We are to part," he thought.

"What is it, princess?" he said; "any thing is better than suspense."

"My poor child! my boy!" she exclaimed.

"What—what has happened to him?"

"He is set aside; thrust out of the succession. The Empress Catherine's son named heir to the crown. Poor fatherless forsaken child! forsaken on the steps of a throne, like a beggar's infant on a doorway! O why, why did I leave him! my little Peter—my son."

D'Auban, though he could not forget his own interest in the contents of the letter, checked his anxiety, and only expressed sympathy in her sorrow.

In a moment she took up the letter again, and said: "I am ashamed of caring so much for my son's exclusion from the throne. Have I not often and often wished he had not been born to reign? Would not I give the world to withdraw him from the court? Would that they would let me have him! Who cares for him now? Perhaps I might go one day and steal him out of their hands, and carry him off to this desert, and bring him up in my own faith. But for the present the Comtesse de Konigsmark insists on the fulfilment of my promise. This is what she says, M. d'Auban. 'Princess, if you should come forward at this moment, and seek to establish your position as the widow of the late prince, and the guardian of your son, you will infallibly be treated as an impostor, and your claims set aside. None of those who assisted in your escape could venture to give their testimony to the truth of your assertions. Your reappearance at this time would involve your own family in difficulties with the Czar, and would expose those who saved you in the hour of danger to the

greatest danger themselves. It might even be fatal to your son. As long as there is no one to resent his wrongs or advocate his cause, he is safe in the hands of the emperor. The empress is very kind to him now, but who knows what would be the consequences if she thought you were alive and intriguing against her own son. It grieves me deeply to have to write it, but for the sake of all concerned, I feel bound to claim the fulfilment of your promise, solemnly given at the moment of your departure; and I feel assured that in doing so I am serving your own interest and those of your son. The day may come when, in spite of the late decree, he will ascend the imperial throne. Then, perhaps, you may safely return to Europe; but you know Russia too well not to be aware of the dangers which threaten those nearest to the throne, when not too helpless to be feared.' Nothing can be clearer. I am tied hand and foot—cast off—never to see my child again; for who would know me again years hence? who would believe me then? Oh, my boy, has it indeed come to this!" These words, and the burst of grief which accompanied them, painfully affected d'Auban. She saw it in his face, and exclaimed: "Do not mistake me; you cannot guess, you do not understand, what I feel. It is very strange—very inconsistent."

"God knows, Princess, I do not wonder at your grief. What can I be to you in comparison with your child? How can I claim an equal place in your heart?"

"Equal! Oh, M. d'Auban, do not you see, do not you understand that I love you a thousand times better than that poor child, and that I hate myself for it?"

He silently pressed her hand, and when both had grown calm they parted for that day; he to attend to business,

and she to walk to the village, where she had a long interview with Father Maret. He listened patiently to the outpourings of her doubts, her misgivings and self-accusations; to the inconsistencies of a loving heart and a sensitive conscience. It was a work of patience, for he perfectly well knew how it would end; and feeling certain that she would marry d'Auban at last, and not seeing any thing wrong in her doing so, he gave it as his opinion that she had better not torment herself and him by prolonged hesitation, but agree to join their hearts, their hands, and their plantations; and from that hour to the one in which death would part them, do as much good together as they could in the New World, or wherever else the providence of God called them.

A few weeks later, in the church of the Mission, Charlotte of Brunswick

was married to Henri d'Auban. She had required from him a promise, which he willingly gave, that if the day should ever come when she could approach her child without breaking her promise, that he would not prevent, but on the contrary assist her to do so. As the husband and wife came out of the church they stopped a moment to pray at M. de Chambelle's tomb. As they were leaving it, she said, "Monsieur d'Auban, you have kept your promise to him."

"Ah! but what would the good old man have thought of such a *mésalliance*, Madame?" d'Auban answered.

"I would have told him," she replied, smiling also, but with tears in her eyes, "that the princess lies buried in the imperial vault at Moscow, and that she whom you have married has neither rank nor name—nothing but a woman's grateful heart."

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

Sweet was the hermitage
Of this unploughed, untrodden shore,
Like birds, all joyous from their cage,
For man's neglect we loved it more.
And well he knew, my huntsman dear,
To search the game with hawk and spear,
Whilst I, his evening food to dress,
Would sing to him in happiness.

And I, pursued by moonless skies,
The light of Connocht Moran's eyes.

Campbell.

O she walks on the verandah,
And she laughs out of the door,
And she dances like the sunshine
Across the parlour floor.
Her little feet they patter,
Like the rain upon the flowers,
And her laugh is like sweet water,
Through all the summer hours.

Negro Melody.

A FEW brief years will suffice to record the history of Henri d'Auban and his wife, during the eventful years which followed their marriage. Novelists are sometimes reproached with dwelling on the melancholy side of life, of not presenting often enough to their readers pictures of happiness, such as exists in this world even in the midst of all its sin and suffering. But is it not the same with history? How seldom do its pages carry us through bright and smiling scenes? How few of them record aught else but crime or sorrow? The truth is that there is very little to relate about happy people. A joyous face tells its own story; a peaceful heart has no secrets. If everybody was good and happy, writ-

ers of fiction might lay aside their pens.

She, who though doomed to death had been so strangely fated not to die, and who had passed as it were through the grave into a new world, sometimes felt almost tempted to believe that the whole of her past life was a dream. That the deserted, hated, and miserable princess of former days could be the same person who—now, with a light step and a gay heart, trod the sunny prairies of the New World and the mossy carpets of its wide forests, as if the blue sky over head was the dome of a vast temple, in which the varying seasons kept festival with incense-breathing flowers, and winds whispering songs of praise, seemed indeed

incredible to herself, as it would have been to any one who had looked on this picture and on that. When once she had fully entered into the full spirit of a settler's life, its very freedom from conventional trammels was as agreeable to her as the boundless air to the bird set free, or the sight of the wide ocean to the liberated captive. She had never enjoyed till then a sense of liberty. The gentle formalities of her father's dull court had preceded the miserable slavery of her wedded life, and that had been followed again by all the sufferings of her flight, and of her arrival in America.

Now it seemed as if for the first time sunshine was flooding her soul. In the new atmosphere of faith and love which surrounded her, every faculty was developed, and every aspiration fulfilled. No human happiness is, however, perfect. There were moments when the very blessings she enjoyed called up a sharp pain. When her eyes had been fixed awhile on her husband's face, or on the various beauties of her home, she would suddenly turn them away, and appear to be gazing on some distant scene till tears gathered in them.

And when she became for the second time a mother, when her little girl was born, when she nursed her at her breast, when she carried her in her arms, when she saw her totter on the grass, and then fall with a scream of joy into her delighted father's arms, when she began to lisp a few words of prayer at her knee, and when, as time went on, she did not miss one of her smiles, one of her childish sallies, but noticed and dwelt upon and treasured them all; as she kissed her soft cheek, and twined her little arms round her neck, a feeling, made up of pity and yearning and a vague self-reproach, would for a moment wring her heart at the thought of her first-born, the lonely royal child

in the cold northern palace far away. Sometimes she passionately longed for tidings of her kindred. Sudden and final as her separation had been from them, gushes of tender recollections would now and then arise in her soul, when some accidental word or sound, or the smell of a flower, or a feeling in the air, recalled some scene of her childhood and youth. Of her sister she chiefly thought; who, on the same day as herself, had been doomed to an untried destiny, and with whom she had parted in the blissful unconsciousness of coming woes. Often after a day when she had gathered about her all the little children of the Mission, and played and laughed with them to their hearts' content, her pillow at night would be wet with tears. These were the shadows that clouded over her bright days, but bright they were withal, bright as love could make them. With the quiet enthusiasm of the German character she applied herself to all the duties of her new position, and governed her household with the talent which Peter the Great had discerned in his daughter-in-law. It was a peculiar one she had to rule, but the charm of her manner, joined to the goodness of her heart, carried every thing before it. She was a little bit exacting; she liked to be waited upon and followed about, and made the first object of all her dependents, but they did not love her the less for it. There are persons who are allowed to be tyrants by a sort of common assent; no one has any desire to shake off the yoke, so sweetly and lightly does it sit upon them; but they must be the elected monarchs of their subjects' hearts. Nobody has a divine right to have their own way.

Who would ever have guessed that Madame d'Auban had been reared in a palace who had seen her at work in her kitchen or in her laundry by the river's side? And yet, perhaps, a keen-sighted

observer would have noticed the refinement of all her movements—the grace of her attitudes—and deemed her fit for a throne as she stood amidst her dark-coloured slaves on the green margin of the stream, spreading the white linen on the grass, or wringing it with her still whiter hands.

It was as pretty a picture as possible, with its background of forest trees, and its chequered lights and shades. D'Auban sometimes watched it from a distance, and reminiscences of his classical studies would recur to him as he gazed on his fair and beautiful wife and her dark attendants. Thus were Homer's princesses wont to direct the labours of their maidens. He did not feel as if his bride was one whit less royally occupied than if she had been holding a drawing-room. What would have seemed unbefitting her birth in such occupations if associated with the commonplace scenes of the Old World, seemed transformed into poetry when carried on amidst the grand scenery of the New. The wild-looking Indians; the negresses with their bright-coloured head-dresses; the pines, the palms, the brilliant sky, lent an Oriental colouring to the whole scene. St. Agathe seemed made for the abode of a fairy queen. Nature and fancy had lavished upon it all their gifts; and love, the most potent of all magicians, had heightened all its charms. D'Auban's fond dream had been to make it a perfect home for the woman who had transformed his solitude into a paradise, and many a princess, "nursed in pomp and pleasure," but who had never reigned over a devoted heart, might have envied the fate of the settler's wife. She had her courtiers, too, this princess, who, when once she had renounced her rank and gained happiness in its stead, began, with a truly royal instinct, to gather around her a crowd of satellites, and was more

worshipped than any eastern or western queen. Her house was literally besieged all day by these liege lords of every race and colour. Indians, negroes, and poor whites were equally devoted to the lady of St. Agathe. They claimed her bounty and her sympathy—her help, or, if nothing else, her kind words. They brought offerings also, and laid at her feet fish and game, and fruit and flowers; she who had once, in her days of gloom and misery, disclaimed all love for "the sweet nurslings of the vernal skies," now gladdened with delight at the sight of the prairie lily, the wild rose, or the blue amorpha. The homage paid her by the childlike Indians was almost superstitious. One of the hairs of the head once bowed down in anguish at the feet of a princely ruffian was treasured as a talisman. Father Maret said to her one day, "I must preach, Madame, against the Magnolian idolatry. One of your Indian worshippers wears a stone fastened to his girdle. I asked him what it meant, and he said the wife of the French chief, the white Magnolia, had set her foot on it when she entered his cabin. I cannot sanction the use of these new manitous."

She laughed, and answered, "It is all poetry, reverend Father; poetry in action. Now that I begin to understand the language of these people, I am more and more struck with the imaginative beauty of their ideas, and the graceful form in which they clothe them. I try to enter into its spirit, and to reply to them in the same manner. The other day I met an Indian, an old man, but not of this tribe; he belongs, I think, to the Dacotahs. He stopped, and said to me: 'Ah! my daughter, happy are my eyes to see thee! My heart's right hand I give to thee. The earth never blossomed so gaily, or the sun shone so brightly, as on this day

when I behold thee.' I answered: 'Stranger, your words are very good, and I too give you my heart's right hand; but whence do you know me?' 'The Mississippi,' he said, 'has whispered to the Wabash, and the Wabash to the Ohio, that the white flower of the Illinois loves the race of the red men. Therefore, my daughter, if thou wilt come to the land of the Dacotahs, and to the hut of their Great Eagle, its doors will be open to greet thee in peace.' Was not that pretty, reverend Father, and much more flattering than the best-turned French compliment?"

"I am afraid, Madame," said Father Maret, "that the Indians will propose to make you a woman-chief like the female suns of the Natches."

"And why not?" cried Madame d'Auban gaily. "We might both be suns, or Henri might be the sun, and I the moon and revolve around him. What do you say to this idea, Monsieur d'Auban? Shall we be king and queen of the Illinois?"

Her husband looked up into her face as she bent lovingly over him, and said with a smile, "The hereditary instinct is still at work, I see, Madame. How little we thought," he added, turning again to Father Maret, "how much ambition there is still in this deceitful woman's heart! She has set up a perfect sovereignty over the hearts of this people, and is dreaming of fresh conquests."

"Ah! I took you both in. Well, I own I am ambitious, but it is a little your doing, reverend Father. When one has once realized that principle of yours, of working towards an end, and doing every thing with a purpose, there is no knowing where it may lead one. It is a little like the traveller's story of the Flying Dutchman—when his leg was wound up he could never stop again. I want to convert thousands of souls; to draw all the neighbouring

tribes into the fold of the Church; to have as many missions here as in Paraguay."

"Then, Madame, I see no hope of rest for you on this side the grave," answered the Father with a smile. "I never expected to see you so fond of work."

"There is no saying what indolent natures, when once roused, will arrive at. Do not you notice, reverend Father, great varieties of character and habits amongst these Indian nations?"

"Very striking ones, I should say. The Arkansas and the Algonquins, as well as the Illinois, have received Christianity with much willingness, and are attached to the French. With the Dacotahs and the Natches, though in some respects more civilized, very little progress has been made. The Dacotahs and Choktaws are fierce, warlike races, and, though they call themselves our friends, are not quite to be trusted."

"I often think," d'Auban observed, "that this colony is living on a volcano. Only think how insignificant is the number of our countrymen in comparison with the multitude of natives and of negro slaves we have imported; a mere handful, after all! Things are in a state in which an accidental spark might kindle a flame from New Orleans to the sources of the Mississippi."

"Here at least," said his wife, "we can feel quite in safety; our dear Indians would never turn against us."

"No; because they are almost all Christians," said Father Maret. "Every nation which belongs to the Prayer, as they call our religion, is attached to France. The tie between them and their pastors is a security against disaffection. It is extraordinary that the Government does not feel this, and that, intent as it is on rallying to itself the native Indians, it does so little to forward their conversion and to multiply missions. The fault does not rest with

the Government in France; and M. Perrier would willingly assist the missionaries, but the Company is indifferent to all but material interests."

"Why has it been so difficult," d'Aubian asked, "to evangelize the Natches, the most civilized, perhaps, of all these nations?"

"They have a far more organized system of religion than any other tribe, and it is identified with their habits of life and form of government. When this is the case, it is always more difficult to obtain a hearing."

"Do they not worship the sun, like the ancient Persians?"

"Yes, and their chief is called the Great Sun of the Natches. All his relatives are also suns, women as well as men. But he is himself the chief representative of the glorious luminary they adore. Their temples have some architectural pretensions, and their ceremonies are more plausible than the gross superstitions of the northern tribes. Our converts here are certainly wonderfully good. I do not suppose that you could find in any town or village of Europe, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, so many pious, practical Christians as in this Indian settlement. I regret to say that, for the first time since I came here, I shall be obliged to leave my flock for a while. I must go to New Orleans to confer with my superiors. The father provincial expects me this month. I hope to bring back many treasures for our Mission; amongst them, a detachment of Ursuline nuns. They are doing wonders in New Orleans. What do you say to a log-built convent, Madame? We must fix upon a suitable position. There are several Indian girls preparing to join them."

"How happy Thérèse will be to see the black-robe women she so often talks of! But what will become of the Mission during your absence, reverend Father, not to speak of ourselves?"

"The hunting season is at hand, and our people will soon disperse. Other years I have followed them into the forests, and assembled them on Sundays and festivals."

"Ah! how I enjoyed that time last year," exclaimed Madame d'Aubian "Those encampments round the huge pine-wood fires, in the midst of such beautiful scenery; the grand leafless oaks, the pines burdened with snow, and the magnificent cascades; how they filled the air with music till the frost set in, and then how fine they were, chained spell-bound in awful silence! I shall never forget our Midnight Mass in the open air. The words '*Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis!*' seemed so appropriate under that dark blue sky, studded with myriads of stars, and amongst our childlike people, as simple and good as the shepherds of Bethlehem. Shall we have no Mass at Christmas, reverend Father? Shall we be for weeks, nay, months, perhaps, without a priest?"

"Father Poisson, from St. Louis, has promised to visit you during my absence. You must both do what you can for our poor people, especially the sick, teaching them to supply, by fervent acts of contrition, for the loss of the sacraments. The early Christians for months, and even for years, had to endure similar privations, and so have the English Catholics in our days."

"Seasons of famine," answered Madame d'Aubian, "teach us the blessings of abundance. Henri, do you hear any thing?" she asked, observing that her husband bent forward; so as to catch a distant sound. "Is anybody coming?"

"I thought I heard the tramp of a horse's feet," he said.

They all listened, but the distant sound, if there was one, was drowned at that moment by the shouts of a

troop of children, at whose head was Wilhelmina, Monsieur and Madame d'Auban's little girl. They came sweeping round the corner, and appeared in front of the verandah, where her parents and the priest were sitting.

If her mother was the queen of all hearts in the little world of St. Agathe, Wilhelmina was the heiress apparent of that sovereignty. From the day when the Indian women gathered round her cradle, gazing on the white baby that looked like a waxen image, wondering over its beauty till they almost believed that the tiny creature had blossomed like a lily in the prairie, she had been the favourite and the darling of every man, woman, and child in the Mission. She was fair like her mother, her features as delicate, and the oval of her face as perfect; but her eyes were of a deeper blue, and shaded by dark eyebrows and eyelashes. From her earliest infancy she had always looked older than she was. In her firm step and determined manner there was an amusing likeness to her father. She evinced the most decided preference for the Indians over the Europeans and the negroes. Even as a baby she was wont to stretch out her little arms and call them her dear brown-faces, and at a later age would fall into a passion if any one said white faces were prettier. The loud, monotonous chant of the women, unmelodious as it is in European ears, was pleasing to the child, who, in her aerial cradle amidst the pine woods, had been rocked by its wild music. Her playfellows were almost all of them Indians, and their language was as familiar to her as French or German.

Brought up in the Mission-school, and by their Christian parents, these children were good and innocent. There was only one point on which Mina's parents dreaded the effect of

her constant association with them. The missionaries had not yet succeeded in eradicating from the minds of their converts all their ancient superstitions. Sorcerers and jugglers still exercised some influence over the native Christians. It took a long time to induce them to give up their manitous and their fetishes. These were objects to which a superstitious reverence was attached, and to the possession of which were ascribed many supernatural advantages—success, for instance, in war and in the chase, and immunity from various dangers. A fetish was sometimes an animal, or it might be a plant, or a stone, or a piece of wood. Tales of magic were current amongst the Indians, and held in belief even by those who on principle renounced all intercourse with sorcerers or magicians.

Madame d'Auban, whose mind had wandered at random in her youth in an imaginary world, peopled with self-created visions, and unchecked by any definite faith, and whose only ideas of the supernatural had been drawn from the legendary lore of her native country, and stories of apparitions, such as the well-accredited ones of the white lady who visits the palaces of the Teutonic kings when death is at hand, and of spectral processions like Lutzo's wild rushing, midnight hunt, could not always repress a shudder at the mysterious tales of the Indian wizards. But Wilhelmina, who from her earliest childhood had believed in angels and saints, and to whom the thought of the supernatural world was one of the brightest joys of life, utterly scouted whatever the Church did not teach, and set her face against all superstitious practices with the resolution which was even at that early age a feature in her character. If any of her companions happened to show her a manitou, she stamped

with her tiny feet, and cried out, "Throw it away, or Mina will not love you." If they spoke of apparitions, wailing voices in the forest at night, eyes glaring on them in the darkness, invisible icy hands clasping theirs, she would shake her head, and say, "Mina never hears those voices—Mina never sees those eyes—Mina never feels those hands—Mina makes the sign of the Cross, and, if there are devils near her, they go away."

"But, little Lily of the Prairie," they would sometimes urge, "Red-feather has a manitou that makes him catch more game than any other hunter in the village."

"I don't believe it," Mina would answer; and if they persisted it was true, she said, "Then the devil helps Red-feather. I am sorry for him, and the game he catches will do him no good." In this way she fought her battles, always adhering to her principle, and insisting on her conclusion, "It is not true, or if it is true, it is wicked:" she never deviated from that line of argument. She would not play with any child that had a manitou; but if her companions were frightened at going home in the dark, or would not cross a part of the forest supposed to be haunted by evil spirits, she offered to accompany them, and they were never afraid when they held her little hand, and she sang as they walked along "*Salve Regina! Mater misericordiæ!*"

Mina was a most joyous child. Her mother was sometimes almost alarmed at the exuberance of her spirits, but there was a deep vein of thoughtfulness in her character, and when she had once learnt to read her greatest delight was to take a book out of her father's library and carry it into the garden, where she sat for hours under the shade of a gum tree, poring over the *Lives of the Saints* or *Corneille's Tragedies*. A child's book she had never seen: the few that

might have existed at that time were not to be met with in the colony. One prevailing feeling seemed to grow with her growth, and to strengthen with her advancing years. This was her devoted attachment to the land of her birth and its native inhabitants. It made her angry to be called a French child. She once stained her face and hands with walnut juice to look like an Indian. All the high-flown sentiments to be found in books about patriotism she applied to her own feelings for this beloved country. Whilst learning history and geography from her father she always harped on this point, and exulted in finding on the map that the Seine and the Loire were mere streamlets in comparison with the Mississippi and the Ohio, and maintained that Indian Christians would never do such wicked things as the bad Europeans. She had been named Wilhelmina at Madame d'Auban's earnest request. Her father would have liked to call her Agathe, but yielded to her mother's wishes. "But, my dearest wife," he said, "you will never let her know, I hope, that royal blood flows in her veins, and that she can claim kindred with crowned heads. Let her grow up, I beseech you, in the freedom and simplicity of the lot you have yourself chosen, and let no thoughts of worldly grandeur come between her and her peace. It might well turn a young head," he added with a smile, "to be told that she was the niece of the Empress of Austria, and the sister of the future Emperor of Russia."

Madame d'Auban sighed, though she smiled at the same time. "I promise you to be silent on that point," she said, fondly gazing on her infant's tiny face; "but for my own satisfaction I like her to bear a name which reminds me of my childhood. It is, perhaps, a weakness, but, having broken every tie which bound me to my family, there

is something soothing in the thought of one slight link between us still."

And so the little Creole was named Wilhelmina, and called by her parents Mina, and by the Indians Wenonah, "Lily of the Prairie."

On the evening previously mentioned she had been mistress of the revels at a feast given by Thérèse to her scholars, and now, after dismissing her courtiers with parting gifts of maple-sugar and pine-jelly, she sat down on her mother's knees. Her father, noticing that she seemed rather pensive, asked her what she was thinking of. She raised her head, and said, "I wish I had a brother! Little Dancing-feet said to-night she would take her sweet-cake home to her brother, because he was good, and carried her over the brooks and up the hills when they went out to look for berries. Mother, would not you like to have a son?"

"Come to me, Mina," cried her father, who saw tears in his wife's eyes. Mina went to him, but she too saw those tears, and, rushing back to her mother, she laid her head on her bosom, and whispered, "Mother, have I got a brother in heaven?"

Madame d'Aubau bent down and kissed her. "My Mina," she said, "you have a brother; but you will not see him on earth. You must never mention his name; but when you say your prayers you may ask God to bless him."

"What is his name? Oh, do tell me his name!"

"You may say, 'God bless my brother Peter!'"

"I shall say it very often," cried Mina, throwing her arms round her mother's neck.

"Not out loud, my child."

"No; like this." She moved her lips, without making any sound. Her mother pressed a kiss upon them, and, looking at her husband, said, "It is a

comfort to have told her. I could not help it." He nodded assent, but looked rather grave. He was sorry that the least shadow of a mystery should lie in his little daughter's mind. She had an instinctive feeling that her parents were both grieved at what had passed, and, as is the case with children on such occasions, she did not know exactly how to behave. Slipping off her mother's knees, she went round to Father Maret's side, and asked him to play dominoes.

The tread of a horse was now distinctly heard coming up the approach, a very unusual sound, especially at that time of the year. In another moment both horse and rider became visible, and d'Aubau recognized one of M. Perrier's messengers.

"What, Ferual!" he exclaimed, "is it you? Do you bring letters?"

"Yes, sir; a despatch from M. Perrier."

"Oh, indeed!" He held out his hand for it, and was about to break the seal, but looking up, said, "Mina, run and fetch somebody to hold the horse. You look very tired, Ferual; you have ridden hard, and we know through what sort of country. Madame," he said, turning to his wife, "will you give orders that refreshments may be set before M. Ferual."

The servants were all at work out of doors, so Mina held the horse, and coaxed him to eat some bits of cake out of her hand, and Madame d'Aubau went herself to the kitchen to prepare food for the stranger.

D'Aubau sat down at the table, and was soon absorbed in the contents of M. Perrier's letter. As soon as he had finished the first sheet he handed it to Father Maret, and so on with the others. When both had read the whole despatch, the Father said:

"Your provisions are realized, sooner than we expected."

"Ay," said d'Auban, "I had long feared something of the kind; but how different it is only to anticipate such a calamity, or to have it actually present before one, almost at one's own doors!"

"What will you do?"

"I must go as soon as possible. I don't see how it can be avoided. I consider every Frenchman is bound to obey the Governor at this moment as if he was his commanding officer."

"And your wife and child?"

"I should like at once to take them to New Orleans, where they would be in safety, and then place myself at M. Perrier's disposal."

"I suppose that would be best; not but that they would be safe here, I think. We could trust our Indians."

"Oh! for that matter, I believe every one of them would shed his blood for the mother and the child; but my wife could not endure, I am sure, to be left behind, especially as you, too, are going away. No; we must set off as soon as we can, and must break it to her at once."

"You have no fears for the journey?"

"Not any immediate fears. As I was saying an hour ago, I have long felt that we are living on a volcano. You notice the day fixed for the general insurrection is still some weeks distant—the 15th January, according to our calendar. I suspect that up to that moment we shall find the Indians more than commonly friendly. But for the future of the colony! God help all those engaged in the struggle. I fear it will be a terrible one! Ah!" he said, leaning his head on his hands, "our honeymoon is over! It has lasted nearly ten years. We ought not to repine. It is not often given to man to enjoy ten years of almost uninterrupted happiness. Here she comes! How will she bear to leave St. Agathe! And poor little Mina—what will she feel? Well, well, it must be gone through."

"I will leave you," Father Maret said, as he moved towards the door. "You had better be alone to talk over this matter with your wife; and I have much to do at home. But when your plans are settled, let me know, and on what day you will start."

As he was walking away, Madame d'Auban called him back. He waved his hand with a kind smile, but went on; and her husband said:

"He is anxious to get home, dearest; and I want to talk to you."

"What is the matter, Henri? What does M. Perrier say? Oh! I am sure there is something amiss; I see it in your face. For God's sake, what is it? Nothing that will separate us? I can bear any thing but that."

"Not now, not at present, if you will come with me to New Orleans, where I must go at once. M. Perrier has received information that a general rising of the Indian tribes is to take place on the 15th of December—that they have planned a general massacre of the French. If the Governor had not received timely notice of this conspiracy, the whole colony must have perished. Now there will be time to avert the danger. He wishes me to come to him as soon as possible. He says my long intimate knowledge of the Indians will be of great service at this moment, when the lives of Frenchmen and the fate of the colony hang on a thread. Now, dearest wife, what do you think we should do? For the present we run no danger in remaining here. So many of the Illinois are Christians, that there is no danger of their rising against us."

Madame d'Auban did not answer at once. She walked onwards a few steps into the garden, which had grown beautiful under her care. She looked at the majestic river, the pine forest, the grove of tulip-trees, and all the familiar features of the much-loved scene where

for ten years she had been happy; and then, turning to her husband, said the same words he had uttered a moment before:

"Our long honeymoon is at an end!"

"But our love . . . ?" he tenderly whispered:—

"Is holier, deeper, stronger than ever," she fervently exclaimed. "Do not be sorry for me, Henri; all will be right if only you will take us with you."

"That is indeed what I wish; I am not afraid of our poor Indians. But who knows what might happen if they were attacked by more powerful neighbours."

"And if we were ever so safe—if we could live on in peace whilst others were struggling and perishing around us, we would not accept of such peace as that, Henri. It is your duty to go. It is mine to follow you. If there is danger, let us meet it together."

"Ah, madame! I thought such would be your wish. There is no doubt that I ought to obey M. Perrier's summons, and assist in every way I can in this emergency. I own I could not endure to leave you and our daughter behind. But I am also very reluctant to drag you back into the world you have so much reason to abhor."

"I fear nothing but to leave you. And may I not be of use, also, in the hour of danger? You have taught me to work, my Henri: you can also show me how to suffer and to dare."

"I have no doubt you may be of the greatest use, dearest wife. We may, indeed, be called upon to take a part in this struggle—a terrible one, I fear—for evil passions will be engaged on both sides."

A shade of anxiety passed over her face.

"At New Orleans there are so many Europeans. Is there no danger of my being recognized?"

"Not much, I think, after the lapse of ten years, and when you appear there as my wife. But we must be cautious how we proceed, and at first you must live in retirement—at the Ursuline Convent, perhaps, if I have to leave you for a while. I would rather you were not identified even with Madame de Moldau."

"A likeness may strike people, but nothing more, I should hope. We sometimes forget, dearest, how incredible a true history may be; and every day makes me less like my old self."

D'Auban smiled, and thought the lapse of time did not make her a whit less beautiful. She was at thirty-three, though in a different way, just as lovely as at nineteen.

"Then you will be ready to go as soon as I can arrange about a boat and engage rowers. The sooner we set off the better. Father Maret will go with us, I think. How little we thought, when he was talking just now of his journey, that we should be his companions! The descent of the river is of course a far easier thing than its ascent. Still it is tedious enough. But, please God, we may return here in a few months. We must look forward to that, my dearest wife."

"I dare not think of it, Henri. For some time past I have had a presentiment that we were a great deal too happy here—happier than people usually are. I felt certain a change was at hand. For the last few days I have had ringing in my ears some lines a traveller carved with a penknife on a plank in Simon's barge."

"Oh! my superstitious darling," exclaimed d'Auban, fondly and reproachfully, "will you never give up believing in presentiments? What are the lines you mean?"

And if, midway through life a storm should
 risc
 Amidst the dark'ning seas and flashing skies,

With faith unshaken and with fearless eye,
Thy task would be to teach me how to die.

"And you would teach me to die, Henri, as you have taught me to live."

"I will teach you anything you like, my own love, but I don't see any particular prospect of death just now. And I look forward to gathering plenty of strawberries next summer from the plants we set this morning. It is a great blessing we have an overseer we can trust. Jean Dubois will look after our affairs as well as I could myself. Antoine will come with us, I suppose. And now go and tell Mina of the journey she is about to take."

"Henri," she said, turning back again as she was going into the house, "do you know what a feeling of relief it is when Providence decides a question long debated in one's conscience? I have often thought our life here was like paradise for you and myself, but that a change might be good for Mina; and then I scarcely ever hear now any thing of that other poor child. There may be duties to perform towards him yet. I had never courage to say this; but, now God calls us away, I feel it is right. Perhaps He is doing for me what I had not strength to do for myself."

"Thank God you see it in that light, dearest; but you should have told me you had those scruples."

"Oh, Henri! It is easier to accept than to seek suffering."

It was not quite in d'Auban's nature to feel this. Courage in endurance rather than in action is in general a woman's characteristic.

When it was known in the settlement that the inhabitants of St. Agathe were about to depart, though only for a few months, there was a general feeling of dismay. Not only the Black Robe was going, but the White Chief and his wife and child. It was a public calamity,

and crowds came to St. Agathe to ascertain if it were true.

Mina assembled her friends on the lawn and made them a parting speech. She said she was going to the south, like the birds they used to watch preparing for their yearly flight, and that like them she would return when the winter had come and gone. She was sorry to go, and she carried away in her heart all her Indian brothers and sisters. She would bring them back gifts from the city of the white men: golden balls, such as Simon sometimes carried in his barge, and pictures like those in the church, only so small that they could hold them in their hands—and sweetmeats more delicious than maple-tree sugar. But she should not stay with the white people, she did not like white children—she could not help being white herself, it was not her fault: the lilies could not make themselves red like roses, if they wished it ever so much: she must be white whether she liked it or not." Here the little orator paused, and one of the Indian children answered—

"We love your whiteness, little Lily; we should not love a red rose half so well. We should not think you so pretty if you were brown like us. But when you play with white children in the land where golden balls hang amidst shining leaves, do not love them as you love us; they will not love you as we do. You will get tired of golden balls and sweetmeats. You will long for the forests and the prairies. You will not complain, for the daughter of a chief never complains, even if the enemy tears out her heart. But you will die if you do not come back to us, and then we shall not see you till we go to the land of the hereafter."

In a very few days d'Auban's arrangements were completed, a small amount of luggage stowed in the barge he had engaged, and a mattress placed at one

end of it for his wife and daughter. He took with him a fowling piece, a pair of pistols in case of danger, and also some provisions; for he did not wish to stop at the Indian villages oftener than was necessary. He hoped to kill game as he went along, and so eke out their supplies till they arrived at New Orleans. As to Father Maret, his breviary was the heaviest portion of his luggage. They started on a beautiful October morning. St. Agathe was in its greatest beauty. Madame d'Auban fixed her eyes wistfully on the *pa-villon* as the barge glided away, and took leave of it in the silence of her heart. She squeezed tightly the little hand clasped in her own. Mina's regrets were for the moment swallowed up in the excitement of the journey, and when the boat began to move she clapped her hands with joy.

The descent of the stream, as d'Auban had said, was far less trying than its ascent; still it had its difficulties, its sufferings, and its dangers. In some places it was difficult to steer the boat amidst the floating masses of rotten wood and decaying vegetation which impeded its progress. Sometimes a cloud of mosquitoes darkened the air and inflicted the greatest torment on the travellers. They had to step on shore now and then to get provisions and purer water than that of the river. If they landed amidst the brushwood they were obliged to light fires for fear of serpents. The sun was very hot and the nights sometimes cold. They hurried on as much as they could, without feeling any considerable amount of anxiety; still they could not but long for the journey to end. Now and then they exchanged a few words with some of the natives on the banks of the river. They seemed in general well disposed, and nothing in their language or their looks gave the least intimation that events such as M.

Perrier anticipated were really impending.

One evening the rowers had slackened their speed, they were lying on their oars and the boat gently drifting with the current, when on a promontory a little ahead of them appeared two persons, who hailed them as they approached, and made signs they wished them to stop. They turned out to be Frenchmen from the settlement of the Natches, who were on the look-out for Father Maret. They had heard that a priest was on his way to New Orleans. Father Souel had gone some weeks before to the district of the Yasous. Two or three persons had fallen ill since and were lying on their death-beds in great need of spiritual assistance. The next day happened to be a Sunday, and the French, together with a few native Christians, had commissioned these deputies to entreat the stranger priest to tarry for a few hours to say Mass for them, and to minister to the sick and dying. D'Auban did not much like the idea of this delay, but the need was so urgent that he did not feel himself justified in refusing his assent. The boat was accordingly moored to the shore and a single rower left in charge of it. The travelling party, escorted by the messengers, proceeded to the city of the Natches, where Christians from the neighbouring habitations had met and were awaiting Father Maret's arrival.

Mina was enchanted to land, after so many weary days' confinement in the boat, to run on the grass and to climb the hill which stood between the river and the beautiful plain in which the tribe of the Sun—for so the Natches called themselves—had built their city, or rather the immense village, the huts of which were scattered amidst groves of acacias and tulip-trees. In the centre of a square stood

the palace of the Sun, or chief, of the nation. Opposite to it was the abode of the female Sun, mother of the heir-apparent. It was only as to size that these palaces differed from the other huts. All the houses were composed of one story. They were roofed with thatch interwoven with leaves. The halls were hung with mats of a fine texture and embroidered in various colours. The day was waning as the travellers approached the city. Torches of blazing pine-wood, fixed at certain distances, and carried about in the hands of the inhabitants, threw a red light over the scene, which heightened its picturesque effect. Mina's delight knew no bounds. It was like Fairyland opening to her sight. New and beautiful flowers seemed to grow on every side, and the golden fruit on the trees, mingling with white blossoms, filled her with admiration. She saw, for the first time, regular gardens and alleys symmetrically planted. All the gorgeous beauty of southern vegetation united to a degree of civilization she had never before witnessed.

The party was received at the door of Father Souel's hut by his only servant, an old negro, who clapped his hands with joy at the sight of a black-robe. He explained in broken French all the chief of prayer would have to do, and, with scarce a moment's delay, Father Maret hastened to the huts of the sick persons he named to him. D'Auban in the mean time went to visit some of the neighbouring French colonists. He found them unconscious of any approaching danger, and did not think it prudent to communicate to them the intelligence he had received from M. Perrier. Circumstances might have changed since his letter had been written, and, in any case, a panic amongst the Europeans would only have been likely to precipitate a collision with the natives.

In a very short time now, he would be able to confer with the governor of the colony on the necessary precautions to be taken for the protection of the Europeans. One person mentioned that, a short time ago, a deputation from the chief had gone to M. Chépar, the commander of the neighbouring fort, to remonstrate on some harsh measures which the Natches complained of. There had been a great deal of mutual irritation at that time, which now appeared to have subsided. Apprehensions, however, were entertained of ill-will towards the French on the part of the Dacotahs, a fierce race, often at war with its neighbours, and supposed to be hostile to the colonists.

M. des Ursins, the owner of one of the principal concessions in this district, described the Natches as a clever, cunning, but effeminate people, who would never venture on any daring act, or do more than strive to outwit their neighbours and cheat them in their bargains. "They have had, however," he added, laughing, "the worst of it just now in a transaction of this sort. Their hunters, which comprise, as you know, almost all the men of the tribe, are preparing for the winter season, and have been at the fort haggling with the officers about a purchase of guns and powder. In their eagerness to outbid each other they overdid their offers, and, I believe, our people made a good thing of it, and secured an immense supply of fowls, Indian corn, and provisions of all sorts."

"How far is it from here to the fort?" asked d'Auban, who had listened thoughtfully to these details.

"About a league. The commandant will be delighted to see you, and to have an opportunity of sending a letter by safe hands to the governor."

"Perhaps it would be as well that I should see him. Where does the père Souel say mass when he is here?"

"When the weather is fine, in the open air; or in the winter or rainy season, in a hut which is ill-fitted for a chapel. There are not a great many Christians here, you know. We have no regular resident missionary, and no school. There have been fewer converts amongst the Natches than amongst any other tribe, I believe, with which Europeans have had relations. They are more attached to their form of worship than the other Indians. We colonists are not an edifying set, as you well know, so that it cannot be said that religion flourishes here. Still, we like to hear Mass now and then. We have not turned quite heathens. So, *au revoir*; to-morrow in the field behind the hut, where, I believe, you are staying."

D'Auban walked back to the village. The moon was shedding her pale light on the trembling foliage of the acacias, the large tulip leaves rustled in the night breeze, and the magnolias emitted their incense-like odour.

As he approached the outskirts of the city, something white came running swiftly towards him, and, before he had time to recognize her, Mina threw herself into his arms:

"Child!" he exclaimed, with the sort of anger which anxiety gives, "What are you doing, here? Why have you left your mother?"

"We both fell asleep when you went away, but I woke up in a little while. It was dull to lie down doing nothing when the moon was shining so brightly; I thought I would steal out quite softly, without disturbing my mother, and gather, in the field behind the house, some flowers to put on the altar to-morrow morning; I have seen some vases in Père Souel's room like those we have at home."

"You should not have left the hut alone, Mina," said her father, taking her by the hand.

"I have got these beautiful red flowers, papa, and I met some friends in that field."

"Friends! What friends?"

"Two Indian boys, papa, with dark black eyes and long hair hanging down their backs, and bright feathers round their heads, and belts embroidered with red silk about their waists. The moment they saw me, one of them came and spoke to me, in a language a little like my own, but not quite the same. Yet I understood what he said. He asked if I was his little sister who had gone some time ago to the land of the hereafter. I shook my head, and then the other boy said: 'Your sister's skin was of the colour of the leaves which fall in autumn, and her eyes like the berries we gather on the guava bushes. But this is a daughter of the white men with a neck like snow and eyes of the colour of the sky.' But the other answered: 'I am sure she is not a child of the white men. She is not like any child I have ever seen, and I should like to have her for my own. I think she comes from the great blue salt lake which some of our people speak of, or from some cloud in the sky.'"

"What did you say to them, Mina?" asked her father, clasping her hand still tighter, with a vague sense of uneasiness.

"I told them I was an Indian child, father, and that I was born in a land a great way off, which belonged to another tribe, and that the Indians I loved were Christians. Then they told me that they were children of the sun, and one of them touched my hair, and said that a ray of sunshine had turned it into gold, and the other asked to look at my little crucifix—this one round my neck. He said something about the black-robe chief of prayer, and then spoke in a low voice to the other, who asked me my name. I said it was

Wenouah, the Lily of the Prairie. They gave me these flowers, which I was not tall enough to gather myself. Will they not look beautiful on the altar, these bright red flowers?"

D'Auban smoothed and stroked her head, and hurried towards the hut. The evening was beautiful; the scenery enchanting; the air soft and balmy; but he felt ill at ease. There seemed to him a heavy weight in the atmosphere. Perhaps it was only his fancy. Perhaps a storm was gathering. A few dark clouds were lying over the mountains to the westward. The lights from the pine-wood torches in the town were brighter than ever. Groups of Indians were scattered about amongst the trees, some playing at active games, some sitting in circles round men who were soothsaying and telling fortunes, after the manner of their tribe. From the trees hung cradles, in which infants were rocked to sleep by the evening breeze. At the fountain in the middle of the square, maidens were filling their wooden pitchers. Serene, lovely, and very picturesque was the aspect of that Indian city as the moon rose high in the dark-blue sky, as the light of myriads of stars shamed the brightness of the pine-wood torches. Strange it was that precisely at that moment a fit of home sickness came over d'Auban such as he had never felt in the wilder northern regions he had so long inhabited. But in this hour of serene beauty, in this spot of luxuriant loveliness, he thought, with a pang that seemed to cause him absolute physical pain, of the smell and feeling of the briny, damp westerly wind as it used to blow in his face on the heights of Keir Anna; and of the bold, brave men who had carried him on their shoulders in the days of his childhood. He longed for his native land; for a glimpse of its cloudy sky, with a feverish longing

like that of a dying man on the battle field for a glass of cold water. He turned away with loathing from the sight of the fair Indian valley studded with white huts and gleaming with lights which glowed amidst the olean- ders like the fire-flies in the groves of Italy, and hurried to the hut, where his wife had just started up from the profound sleep of fatigue, and missed Mina from her side. At that moment Father Maret came in also. He had been visiting the sick ever since his arrival, and administered the last sacraments to two or three who were dying.

"To-morrow morning," he said, "I shall have to go and give Communion to an old Christian sachem at some distance from the village, and as soon as I return I must say Mass in the field behind this hut. Almost all the Christians will come. We can depart immediately afterwards."

"The boys who gave me the bright red flowers will be there," said Mina; "they told me so. They said, 'We will take care of you to-morrow, little sister of the children of the sun. We will take you to our mother.'"

"What did they say?" said d'Auban, sharply; "repeat their words exactly." Mina did so, and then said: "Father, do let us stay another day in this beautiful village."

"God forbid," murmured d'Auban. "This place kills me. The very smell of the flowers seems to poison the air. I never hated any spot so much. Now let us try to eat something, and then get to sleep."

Soon the mother and the child were slumbering quietly side by side on a mat, with some cloaks for pillows. Father Maret took his breviary out of his pocket, and said: "It has been a good day's work, my dear d'Auban. What a blessed thing it is to help a poor soul on its way to eternity! Thank God we stopped here. It has

not been in vain. Several Christians would have died without the sacraments if His Providence had not conducted us to this place."

"You look quite worn out," said d'Auban. "Surely you will not say your office now: you will take some rest?"

"It will be time enough to rest tomorrow," answered the priest, with the

smile which his friends knew so well, and which lighted up his pale face at that moment with more than usual brightness. Long did d'Auban remember those words, and the smile which accompanied them. For some minutes he watched the priest saying his office, and then his own eyelids closed, and he fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

Woe, woe to the sons of Gaul!

They were gathered, one and all,
To the harvest of the sword,
And the morning sun, with a quiet smile,
Shone out over hill and glen.

Aye the sunshine sweetly smiled,
As its early glance came forth,
It had no sympathy with the wild
And terrible things of earth.—*Whither.*

Odours of orange flowers and spice
Reached them from time to time,
Like airs that breathe from Paradise
Upon a world of crime.—*Longfellow.*

BEFORE the sun had risen, just as a faint ray of light was dawning in the east, Father Maret was on his way to the hut of the old sachem, whom he had promised to visit that morning. When he arrived there a noble-looking Indian boy opened the door for him, and pointed to the couch where the sick man was lying. Whilst the priest was administering the last sacraments to the sachem, he went out of the hut, and stood there gazing, with folded arms and mournful brow, at the sky, from which the stars were gradually disappearing.

When the Father was preparing to take leave of the old man, he detained him and said, "Good Father, call my son Ontara; I would fain speak to him

in your presence, and make him my parting gift. He is one of the sons of the Woman Chief; his father was a famous warrior who died in the war with the Choktaws. He has been as a son to me since the time I carried him in my arms, and taught him to shoot and to swim. He is good, and the Great Spirit sends him higher and better thoughts than to other youths of his age. But he believes not yet in the Christian prayer. The words I have spoken to him have fallen unheeded on his ear, like the seed scattered on the hard rock. But I will give him this crucifix, which the Black Robe of the Yasous gave me when I was a prisoner amongst that tribe, and he will keep it for the love of Outalissi, till the day

when the voice of the Great Spirit speaks to his soul, and he believes the Christians' prayer." As he said this a change came over the features of the old man, and the priest, who saw that death was at hand, hastened to summon the boy. His dark fearless eyes fixed themselves on the face of the dying sachem, who said :

"My son, take this, my greatest treasure. You will one day know its value."

"Is it a manitou?" asked the boy.

"No, my son; it is the image of Him who died upon the cross; of the Son of the Great Spirit whom Christians adore."

"I cannot belong to the Black-robe's prayer," the boy said; "I am a child of the Sun."

The old man's eyes beamed with a sudden light. "My beautiful one," he cried, "my hunter of the hills, the Great Spirit will make thee one day a fisher of men." The energy with which these words were pronounced exhausted the speaker; he fell back in a swoon. While the missionary was striving to recall life and consciousness to the sinking frame, the boy hastily snatched the crucifix, which had fallen from his hands, and hid it in his bosom.

A few moments afterwards the aged sachem breathed his last, and whilst the priest, kneeling by the side of the corpse, repeated in a low voice the "Miserere," the Indian youth struck up a death-song, in which were blent, with great pathos, his own impassioned regrets, praises of the dead, and predictions as to the destiny of the departed spirit in the islands of the blessed, in the kingdom of the hereafter. The hour which had been fixed upon for Mass was arrived. Madame d'Aubau and the Père Souel's negro servant had arranged the altar on the greensward behind the hut: a sort of plain which

extended from the village to the forest. Mina had ornamented it with nosegays of red and white flowers, and festoons of the trailing vine. The Père Maret returned just before the appointed time. He had to hear confessions before beginning the Holy Sacrifice, and stayed in the hut for that purpose. Meanwhile the French colonists and a small number of Indian converts emerged from the shadowy depths of the neighbouring groves, and seated themselves upon the grass. Men, women, and children were there. Even the least religious amongst the emigrants felt a pleasure at the thought of hearing Mass again.

At last the Père Maret came out of the hut with his vestments on, and the people knelt down before the altar. He began by reading some prayers in French; then he preached a short sermon. D'Aubau, who was to serve his Mass, was standing a little behind him. He saw that the congregation was still gradually increasing; more and more Indians were approaching from various directions; quietly, unobtrusively, they drew near. There was no sound of feet on the smooth grass. They stood in a respectful attitude, motionless like statues; rank after rank of these sable forms ranged themselves around the worshippers; not a footfall, not a whisper was heard; it was like the snow-drift which accumulates noiselessly in the silence of night; nothing was heard but the voice of the preacher. When the sermon was ended, and he had given his blessing, he turned towards the altar. D'Aubau glanced at the spot where his wife and his child were kneeling, with their heads bowed down to receive that blessing, and in that one glance he took in the aspect of the whole field; it was now crowded with Indians; not one spot was left unoccupied, not one issue open. The Père Maret began Mass.

"Judica me, Deus, et discerne cau-

sam meam de gente non sancta. Ab homine iniquo et doloso erue me." With what a strange force and meaning those words fall on d'Auban's ear! The alternate sentences are uttered. The Confiteor is said, first by the priest, and then by the server in the name of the people. Then the priest goes up to the altar, first to the right side to read the Introit, a short passage from the Scriptures; then to the centre, to cry out for mercy for himself and others. "Kyrie Eleyson," he says. "Kyrie Eleyson," answers the server. Ay! God have mercy on them both! God have mercy on all present!

A shot is fired, and the priest falls upon the flowery sod at the foot of the altar, beneath the cloudless sky, in the bright sunshine, robed in his white vestments; like a soldier on duty struck down at his post. D'Auban's first movement is towards him. He kneels by his prostrate form. The wound is mortal; life ebbing fast. One last word the dying man struggles to utter. D'Auban puts his ear close to his lips. "The young Indian, Ontara," he whispers, and then he breathes a sigh and dies. When d'Auban raised his head the scene before him was one of wild and horrible confusion; the work of slaughter had begun. A cry of despair burst from him. Paralyzed one moment by the hopelessness of the calamity, he stood like one transfixed, his eyes turned towards the spot where he had last seen the treasures of his heart; the next he made a desperate rush in that direction, but crowds of armed Indians encircled him on every side. The shrieks of the murdered were in his ears. The bodies of his dead countrymen flung at his feet. "Kill him," cried the Indian who seemed to command the rest. "Kill the companion of the Black Robe! Destroy every Frenchman! Slay every white man! Let not one escape to tell the fate of

the others! But do not kill the women and children; the Great Sun of our tribe orders that they shall be kept as slaves." D'Auban caught the sense of these words, and though his brain seemed on fire, he was in the full possession of his senses. Quick as lightning the thought struck him, that to surrender his life at that moment was to doom his loved ones to hopeless misery. If God gave him strength to make his escape, help might yet be obtained. To save himself was to save them. The blood rushed back to his heart, and strength returned to his limbs. With a wordless prayer to the God of Samson and of Joshua, and a passionate invocation to the Immaculate Mother, he dashed his powerful frame against his numberless foes, and made his way through the infuriated crowd, who shrunk back appalled by his apparently superhuman strength. Once, when surrounded and all but overwhelmed by a rush of assailants, a young Indian sprang upon him, and seemed about to drag him down to the earth; but, by a sudden movement, he threw himself back on his advancing countrymen, checked them for an instant, and opened for d'Auban a passage through their ranks. During the instant he had grappled with him he whispered in his ear, "Do not fear for the white woman and her child; Ontara will protect them." With a speed which baffled even the swift-footed Indians, d'Auban ran towards the river, and sprang into the canoe of the barge with which one of his boatmen had remained the night before. Cutting with a knife the rope that fastened it to the shore, both began to row for their lives. The natives pursued them. They had boats also. They had sworn by the great Sun that not a white man should escape. Arrows whizzed in the ears of the pursued, and the savages were gaining upon them. For one in-

stant—it was a desperate expedient—d'Auban laid down the oars, and seized the fowling-piece lying at the bottom of the barge. He levelled it at them. The pursuers, terrified at the sight of the gun, dashed aside and slackened their speed. He loaded the piece and fired. "It is a phantom boat," cried the Indians, "no mortal man could row so fast!" and they turned back. After some hours, during which d'Auban had to keep up, by promises and encouragements, the courage of the man who shared with him the desperate exertions of those fearful moments, he laid down his oars, and stoored to the shore.

"Is this the way to the French fort?" asked his companion, who supposed they were making for Bâton Rouge.

"No," answered d'Auban; "by this time the French at the fort are probably massacred. But hence we can proceed to the district of the Choktaws, a tribe which hates the Natches, and to whom the tale we have to tell will be like the sound of their own war-cry. You may follow or leave me as you please. Nay, you had better take the boat, and carry the intelligence of the massacre to the first European settlement you can reach, and tell the commander or the resident, whoever he may be, in the name of humanity, to concert with his neighbours immediate measures of relief for the captives."

Then d'Auban plunged into the woods, and hurried on his way to a village of Choktaw Indians not far from the stream. There he made an appeal to the inhabitants, and with their own sort of wild eloquence called upon them to rise and follow him to the rescue of the wives and children of the white tribe. The flame which his words kindled spread from wigwam to wigwam, awakening the fierce antipathies of race as well as rousing the sympathy of men whose hearts were stirred

within them by the expressions of anguish which broke forth from a heart torn by conflicting emotions of hope and of terror. The appeal of the white man was heard. The chief of the tribe rose like a lion from his lair; seven hundred warriors gathered round his standard, and, with tomahawk in hand, marched under d'Auban's guidance across the pathless savannah and the primæval forest, towards the sunny plain where the Natches were triumphing over the slaughter of the white men, and insulting the pale women and the scared children of the murdered French.

It took days to prepare, days to effect this march; days that were like centuries of anguish; days during which d'Auban's hair turned white, and lines were stamped on his forehead which time never effaced.

When Madame d'Auban had seen the Père Maret fall, she had risen to her feet, and stretched her arms towards her husband, whom she had caught sight of for an instant supporting the form of the dying priest. But soon she could discern nothing more amidst the dreadful scene which ensued. She could only, in a half-kneeling, half-sitting posture, clasp her child to her breast, and listen with a cold shudder to the shrieks of the dying and the savage yells of the murderers.

In a short time she felt her arm grasped, and looking up in speechless terror at the Indian who had seized it, she heard him say, "You are my slave, pale-faced daughter of the white man. Henceforward you shall serve as the black skins have served the children of the Sun."

Minna, who understood the language of the natives better than her mother, pushed back the Indian with her little hands, and cried out, "Where is Ontara, the son of the Woman Chief? Ontara!" she cried out in her childish, shrill, and yet sweet voice. "Ontara! help." The



boy she thus called appeared at that moment in sight. He rushed to the spot where both mother and child were wringing their hands, and refusing to follow the Indian, whose hands were dripping with blood. He flourished his tomahawk over the head of the latter—bade him with a torrent of imprecations resign his captives, who were the slaves, he said, of his mother the Woman Chief, and making a sign to Mina, he prepared to lead them away. The child, less bewildered than her mother, and full of confidence in the protection of her playmate of the preceding day, whispered to her, "Come, mother, come away! They will kill us if we stay here. That dreadful man will come back again before my father returns to help us."

Madame d'Auban rose, and, with eyes glazed with despair, gazed on the frightful scene—the lifeless corpses, the deserted altar with its red and white flowers still unfaded, and the blood running on all sides.

"Henri!" she cried in a loud voice, "Henri! have they murdered you, my beloved?" Wild with grief, and dragging Mina by the hand, she rushed to the spot where the priest was lying dead, and falling on her knees by the lifeless form, she clasped her hands, and, as if he who had been as an angel of God to her on earth could still hear her voice, she cried out, "O Father, dear Father! where is he?" No audible answer came from the icy lips. The eyes which had looked so kindly upon her in life, did not turn towards her now. But from that face, calm and beautiful in the serenity of death—from the silent lips which for so many years had uttered none but words of holiness and peace, an answer came in that hour of distracting woe, as if speaking from the grave or from the skies where the pure spirit had fled. She bowed down to the ground, even as by a martyr's

side, and reverently kissed the hand which had so often blest her, and then, with a great patience and a great strength, she raised her eyes first to the cloudless sky, and then once more on that scene of horror and desolation, where neither amongst the living nor the dead could she see her husband.

"Fiat voluntas tua," she murmured with a sublime effort of resignation, always more difficult during the anguish of suspense than in the hour of hopeless certainty.

The Indian boy had followed them, and was gazing with an unmoved countenance on the features of the dead. "Follow me," he said, pointing to the palace of his mother the Woman Chief. When they had arrived there, he ushered the captives into her presence. She was seated on a mat surrounded by her attendants. The young chief said something to her, and she nodded assent. He made a sign to Mina to approach. The child looked up into the face that was looking kindly upon her, and said, with a burst of tears, "My father! give me back my father!"

The Woman Chief shook her head, and answered, "All the white men must die. But the child of the white man shall live and serve the children of the Sun!"

Mina gave a piercing cry. Ontare led her away, and whispered in her ear, "Straight as an arrow from a bow, and swiftly as a feather before the wind, the White Chief has gone down the river, far from the land of the Natches."

Mina ran to her mother, clasped her arms round her neck, and said to her in a low voice, "My father is yet alive! He is gone down the river. The young chief says so."

"Then there is still hope for us," murmured Madame d'Auban, as she pressed her child to her heart. "God is merciful! That hope makes life endurable, and for thy sake, and perhaps

for his, I must try to live, my Mina."

And then she, who had already gone through so many and strange vicissitudes, the daughter and the sister of princes, the spoilt child of her father's little Court, the victim of the fierce Czarowitz, the whilom happy wife of the French colonist, began that night her work as the slave of her Indian captors—meekly, courageously, as one who had been schooled in the lessons of the Cross.

All the wives and children of the murdered Frenchmen were condemned to the same doom, and in the anguish of bereavement, some of them with nerves and feelings almost to phrensy sore, many of them without any religious support and consolation—for a great number of these European emigrants, through neglecting to practise their religion, had almost lost their faith—found themselves in presence of the greatest imaginable calamity without any human prospect of relief.

Their Indian masters exulted in their presence at the tragical fate of their victims, and spoke openly of the massacre which was to take place on a particular day, at every place where there were French settlements amongst all the tribes on the shores of the Mississippi, as far as the great lakes beyond its sources, or the sea at its mouth. Not one Frenchman, they boasted, would survive to carry the news to the land they came from. The new French city, and every fort and habitation in the country, would be levelled to the ground, and the Indians who had learnt the Frenchman's prayer, and who tried to save the life of a black robe, were to be tied to a stake and burnt at a slow fire.

The usefulness of their new slaves induced the savages to spare their lives, and even to treat them with

some degree of humanity. This was at least in most instances the case. They were delighted to make the European women sew and make up garments for them out of the skins of beasts and the pieces of cloth seized at the Fort where M. Chépar and all his companions had been murdered. The arrival of several carts laden with goods at that military station a day or two before had excited the covetousness of the chiefs and the sachems, and induced them to hurry operations and give the signal of murder and plunder before the day appointed for a simultaneous rising throughout the colony. The sight of some of these articles of European manufacture drew tears from the eyes of the poor captives, who saw in them many a remembrance of their native land. Homely bits of furniture; pieces of cloth and linen which bore the stamp of some manufacturing town which some of them had once inhabited; cups and glasses and plates such as were in common use amongst the bourgeoisie of that epoch, and many of these things were wrapt up in numbers of the "*Mercure*," or the "*Gazette de France*," or the "*Journal de Trévoux*," which were read with eagerness and wept over by the women, before whose eyes rose in those moments visions of some old picturesque French town, or of some valley in Provence or in Normandy, or of the narrow streets of Paris—a city which always preserves a powerful hold on the affections of those who have been born and bred within its precincts. Dreams of its bright river, its quaint buildings, sunny quays, and shady gardens, have haunted an exile's sleep full as often as the snowy summits of the Swiss Alps or the golden groves and myrtle bowers of Italy.

Madame d'Auban and her daughter were treated gently enough, owing to the protection of the young chief

Ontara. Their cleverness at needlework also obtained for them the good graces of the woman Sun, who was delighted to appear before her subjects decked in European finery. Most of their time was spent in this employment; They sat on the grass in a grove of acacias behind the palace hut, and worked several hours a day. Madame d'Auban found relief in this manual labour to her tormenting thoughts. Mina helped her eagerly or wearily, according to the mood of the moment. Children cannot endure the ceaseless pressure of sorrow or anxiety. When the uncertainty about her father's fate pressed upon her, she hid her head in her mother's bosom, and gave way to passionate weeping; or when she saw that mother looking pale and worn and working like a slave, her zeal in assisting her was unbounded. But if her friends the Indian youths appeared, the wish to play was irresistible.

Both the young chiefs neglected other amusements, and even the more serious business of hunting and fishing, in order to play with the little white maiden, who was to them a perfect vision of beauty and delight. It was a pretty sight, the fair captive child sitting under a hedge of oleanders between her two Indian playmates, who were like each other as to colouring and features, but whose countenances were strikingly dissimilar. There was something noble and refined in Ontara's person and manners—a gentleness which, in a European, would have been thought good breeding. His movements were slow and graceful, and his eyes had the pensive, almost mournful, expression peculiar to his race. Osseo's face was a cunning one, and if any thing irritated him a malignant light gleamed in his deep-set eyes, which were at those moments more like those of an angry animal than of a man. He was related to the royal

family, but not a son of the reigning sovereign. His wonderful quickness and agility had made him a favourite with the young chief. They were constant companions, and equally devoted to the little white captive.

One day Ontara brought her a cluster of the waxen blossoms of the Mimosa. She wove them into a wreath, and with some beautiful feathers Osseo had just given her, made a crown which she laughingly placed on her head. A sudden gloom darkened Ontara's brow, and he spoke angrily to Osseo. Angry glances and gestures followed. Mina instantly pulled to pieces both the garland and the crown, and making a nosegay of the feathers and the flowers, placed it in her breast. She had caught the habit of expressing her thoughts by signs, and was as quick as the Indians themselves in the use of symbols.

Osseo pointed to the nosegay and said, "The flowers will be dead and drop off to-morrow, but the feathers will live in the maiden's bosom till she is as tall as her mother."

Again a dark look gathered over Ontara's brow, but Mina hastened to reply—"The leaves may lose their colour, but they smell sweetly even when they are dry and dead. The feathers never smell at all. But they are very pretty," she added, with such a bright smile that Osseo exclaimed:—

"In your eyes, little white maiden, there is a more powerful fetish than the one I carry in my bosom;" and thrusting his hand in his breast, he showed the head of a serpent.

Mina shuddered, and said that a fetish was a bad thing, and that she hated serpents. There was no fetish in her eyes, she was certain, and no serpent in her breast.

On the following morning, Osseo came to the Acacia Grove, and told Mina to come with him into the woods,

and that he would give her more beautiful flowers than Ontara had brought her the day before, and a bird that would imitate the sound of her voice. She looked wistfully at her mother, for she longed to run across the fields into the forest; but Madame d'Auban shook her head, and bade her sit down to her work. She told Osseo that Mina belonged to the woman chief, and could not go out without her leave. Osseo's eyes gleamed with anger, and he threatened to drag the child away. He said she was his slave, and he would compel her to go with him. Terrified at this youth's looks and manner, Madame d'Auban resolved to place Mina under Ontara's protection. She felt an instinctive confidence in his generous nature, and knew well that if an Indian once adopts any one as his sister or his child, he faithfully fulfils the duties he thus assumes. So the next time the young chief came to the palace, she made him understand that Osseo called Mina his slave, and threatened to carry her away. "Will you protect her, Ontara?" The eyes of the Indian boy had flashed fire when he heard of Osseo's threats; and when Mina's mother made her appeal, he made a sign to them both to follow him. He led the way to the assembly of the sachem, and, in the presence of the Sun his father, he solemnly, according to the custom of his tribe, made her his sister; and as a token of this adoption, he placed his hand on her head, threatening at the same time, with a loud voice, death to any one who should molest her. "She is my sister," he cried. "She has returned from the land beyond the grave. She went away when the leaves were falling off the trees, and now she has come back with the green leaves and the flowers, with golden hair and sunny eyes. No one shall dare to touch her. She is a daughter of the Sun."

Madame d'Auban looked gratefully at their young protector, and raised her hand to her lips—a token of friendship which he understood.

Mina was overjoyed. "I have a brother now," she cried, and threw her arms round the boy's neck. There was something entirely new to the Indian youth in the child's innocent affection, and in her way of showing it. It touched a chord in his heart which had never yet been moved. From that moment she became dearer to him than aught else on earth. Her mother's trust in him, her soft kiss, and the name of "brother" which she gave him, made life a different thing to Ontara from what it had yet been. He had never shed a tear—his countrymen do not weep—but a strange sensation rose in his throat, and he turned away, not understanding what it could mean.

On one of the long weary days which had elapsed since that of the massacre, Madame d'Auban was sitting at her work on the grass near their hut, and Mina by her side. A Frenchwoman, who was carrying a pitcher on her shoulder, stopped to speak to them on her way to the well. She was the widow of M. Lenoir, one of the murdered officers at the fort, and a slave in the chief's palace.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "Another companion in adversity! May I ask your name, Madame?"

"Madame d'Auban."

"Ah! Madame d'Auban—the wife of the . . . Should I say the late—Colonel d'Auban?"

It is easier under certain circumstances to bear positive unkindness than an irreverent, well-meaning handling of a throbbing wound in our hearts; and perhaps the greatest trial of all is the sympathy expressed by those who think their sorrows are like our sorrows, when they no more resemble them than the prick of a pin does the stab of a dagger

"Ah!" sighed Madame Lenoir. "My poor dear husband! He would come to this horrid country to make his fortune, and Fortune has played him a terrible trick! He was one of the first killed by those demons that dreadful morning."

"Were you here, Madame? and was your husband also massacred?"

Madame d'Auban felt as if she was laid on the rack. "I live in hope..." she murmured, but could not finish her sentence.

"My father was not killed," said Mina. "I am sure he will come back and take us away."

"Ah! M. d'Auban escaped. *Je vous en fais mon compliment*. It was, indeed, a piece of luck. I wish my poor dear husband had been as fortunate! But he was what I call an unlucky person. If there was a possibility of getting into a scrape or a difficulty, he was always sure to do so. I used to say to him, 'My friend, nothing ever succeeds with you. You were certainly born under an unlucky star. The Fates did not smile on your cradle. You never do the right thing for yourself.' Ah! poor man, he used to shake his head and say, 'Well, my dear, I almost think you are right. I never took an important step in life that I did not repent of it.' You see he had great confidence in my judgment."

"Was yours a happy marriage, my dear Madame? Oh! pardon me, if I distress you. Our common sorrows—for no doubt you are not quite easy about your excellent husband's fate, even though you are so much less to be pitied than I am—seem to me to establish quite an intimacy between us. Is this charming young lady your only child, Madame?"

Mina gave a quick glance at Madame d'Auban's face. The talkative stranger had trod unawares on the sacred ground

which her mother and herself never approached but on their knees.

"She is my only little girl," Madame d'Auban nervously said, and hastened to ask—"Have you any children, Madame Lenoir?"

"No; and indeed I am very glad of it. M. Lenoir used to regret it; but I have said to him, many times since we came to this country, 'Who was right on that question, M. Lenoir? I suppose you will admit that a wife is quite a sufficient encumbrance, as you stand at present situated?' 'Oh, quite sufficient, my dear, quite sufficient,' he would answer. I must do him the justice to say he did not often contradict me. If I had had any children, I should have been dreadfully afraid of their becoming like those young Indian devils."

"The Indians are not all devils," cried Mina. "I love the Indians."

"O fie! mademoiselle! Love those wicked Indians who murdered the good priest and my poor M. Lenoir, and all the Frenchmen! It was not their fault, I suppose, that your papa escaped?"

"It was one of them that helped him to escape, I know; and I love him and our brave Illinois, and the Choktaws, and the Dacotahs, and many others."

"I have never heard," cried Madame Lenoir, "of all those savages you speak of, little lady; but I know that, for my part, I should like to see every Indian burnt alive, and their horrid country swallowed up in the sea."

"And I should like to see you in the sea, and I should not pull you out," cried Mina, choking with passion.

"Oh, you little monster!" exclaimed Madame Lenoir.

"Mina, what are you saying?" said her mother, in a severe manner.

"But, mother, why does *she* say such wicked things? Because there are some cruel Indians, must we hate them all?"

"We must not hate even the cruel ones, but pity and pray for them."

"Well, pious people have strange notions!" ejaculated Madame Lenoir, "and they bring up their children very badly, I think. It is very extraordinary how unfeeling devout persons are! Ah! we cannot expect to find much sensibility in those who have not known what suffering is. Good evening, Madame d'Auban. I had hoped we might have proved a comfort to each other in our mutual sorrows, but—"

"Do not hurry away," Madame d'Auban kindly said. "Our trials are indeed great; and we ought to try and help each other. Do not be vexed with me."

"Oh, for that matter, I have a very happy disposition and a particularly sociable temper. But let me advise you, as a friend, not to let that little lady get into the habit of talking too much. One never gets rid of it in after-life. And do not make a *dévôte* of her. Too much religion is a bad thing for children."

A faint shadow of a smile crossed Madame d'Auban's lips. Meantime Madame Lenoir was lifting up with difficulty her heavy pitcher.

"It will be heavier still when filled with water," she said, with a deep sigh, "and my shoulder is already aching with its weight! But I have been threatened with blows by a cross old Indian, in case I do not do her bidding."

The poor woman sat down on the grass, weeping bitterly. It was a selfish, uninteresting grief, but pitiful to witness—like the sufferings of a fly crushed by a wheel.

"Ah! there is Ontara," cried Mina, clapping her hands. "Now you will see that he will help me to fill your pitcher. May I go to the well with him, mother?"

Madame d'Auban assented for the

fountain was not far off. The young chief took up the pitcher, and Mina laid her hand on the handle, to help him, as she said, to carry it. He looked at the little white hand with wonder and admiration. He did not know any thing about gloves, or he might have exclaimed, like Romeo:

O that I were a glove upon that hand!

Mina talked to him eagerly as they walked along; and he called her his "white lily," his "beautiful Wenouah."

When they had reached the fountain, and were letting down the pitcher into the water, she said:

"Oh! how I do wish . . ." and there stopped short.

"What does my flower wish?" Ontara asked. "Name thy wish, and I will ask my father the Sun to give thee whatsoever thou desirest."

"I do not want any thing he can give me. What I wish is, to see a black-robe pour water on my brother's head, and speak the words which would make him a Christian."

"The chief of prayer is no more. I have sung his death-song in my heart. He can never again speak to the living."

"But there are other black-robés—other chiefs of prayer?"

"They must all be killed by this time. Think no more of them, little dove of the white man's tribe, and speak not to Ontara of the French prayer. He is a child of the Sun, and worships his father."

"But I know he carries a crucifix in his bosom," Mina eagerly cried, pointing to the Indian's breast.

"My father, Outalissi, gave it me; and for his sake I keep it close to my heart."

At that moment Osseo joined them. Mina was not afraid of him when her new brother was by her side. He was

much excited, and cried out, as soon as he saw them :

"I have discovered the fetish which the great sorcerer of the Abnakis possessed. He told me of it some time ago, and I have been searching for it ever since."

"What is it?" Ontara asked.

Osseo drew a small serpent from his bosom: "I have charmed it to sleep," he said, as Mina drew back affrighted. "It will not wake till I bid it. This fetish is so powerful that he who owns it never shoots an arrow in vain, and is never conquered in battle; and when he goes out hunting he brings home more game than any one else."

"Throw it away, Osseo; throw it away," Mina exclaimed. "It will do you no good."

"And if I throw it away," said the youth, with a sneer, "will the dove of the white tribe nestle in my bosom?"

"I will love you very much," Mina answered, fixing her large bright eyes on the young savage.

"Not so much as Ontara?" said Osseo, with a malignant glance at the young chief.

"Ontara is my brother," Mina answered, drawing closer to her protector.

"And if any one dares to touch a single hair of her head," cried Ontara, "I will take him before the sachems, and slay him where he stands."

A dark hue overspread the face of the other youth; but he made no direct reply. Stroking the serpent in his bosom, he said to the little girl: "When five summers have come and gone, you shall choose which of us you will marry."

"I will not marry you, and I cannot marry him," Mina answered, with simplicity.

"Why not?" said Ontara, quickly. "You are no longer a slave, since you have become my sister; and when you

are old enough we shall stand before the sachems, in the presence of the Great Sun, and I will make you my wife."

Mina shook her head: "The daughters of the white men, her parents said, did not marry the sons of other tribes."

"Then you will never marry at all," Osseo fiercely cried. "There will not be a single white man left to be your husband. The Indians will kill them all."

"No," Mina answered; "the great God will not let them do it. He is more powerful than all your fetishes."

"But not than the glorious orb which the Natches adore," said Ontara, pointing to the sun, at that moment setting in a bed of fiery clouds.

"The God of the Christians made the sun, and the moon, and the stars," Mina replied, and then she sat down with the two Indians on the grass by the well-side, and they talked of the Natches' worship and the Christian prayer. A child's simple conceptions of religion were more adapted to the comprehension of these uncultivated minds than the teachings of older persons. They listened eagerly to her words. Each of them had fastened, as it were, on the side of their false belief which was most in harmony with their natural tendencies. Osseo's mind was filled with the gloomy superstitions of devil-worship. His faith in spells and charms was unbounded. He had studied the secrets of magic under the most learned soothsayers of the neighbouring tribes, and was an adept in all the arts of witchcraft. Ontara, on the contrary—perhaps from an instinctive preference of light to darkness, and also on account of his close relationship to the representative of the orb of day—yielded a peculiar and exclusive homage to the sun. It seemed to him to embody all the ideas he had ever formed of bright-

ness and majesty. At morn he hailed its rising, at noon he prostrated himself in adoration before its dazzling beams, and saluted its setting with hymns of praise. Mina drew from her pocket a prayer-book, and read to the worshipper of the sun these verses of the Psalms:

“The heavens show forth the glory of God: and the firmament declareth the work of his hands.

“Day to day uttereth speech: and night to night showeth knowledge.

“There are no speeches nor languages where their voices are not heard.

“Their sound has gone forth into all the earth: and their words unto the ends of the world.

“He hath set his tabernacle in the sun: and he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride-chamber, hath rejoiced as a giant to run his way.

“His going out is from the end of heaven, and his circuit even to the end thereof: and there is no one that can hide himself from his heat.”

Ontara listened attentively to her

artless translation of the sublime words of holy writ, and made her repeat it till he learned the verses by heart. Osseo caressed the serpent in his bosom, and said he would belong to the Christian prayer if it had more powerful charms than those of the Abnakis.

“When my arm has acquired its full strength,” he exultingly declared, “and my fetish its full growth, my name will become as famous as that of the great Oneyda, or of the wise Hiawatha, the Son of the West Wind.”

A sign from her mother recalled Mina to the palace; Madame d'Auban was patiently listening to Madame Lenoir's account of the sad manner in which one of her gowns had been cut up to fit it for an Indian woman. If it had been an act of charity to fill her pitcher, it was a greater one still to let her talk of the dresses she had brought from Paris. It comforted her more than anything else could have done, and she went back to her hard duties soothed, as she declared, by Madame d'Auban's sympathy in her trials.

CHAPTER III.

And were not these high words to flow
From woman's breaking heart?
Through all that night of bitterest woe
She bore her lofty part.

The wind rose high; but with it rose
Her voice, that they might hear;
Perchance that dark hour brought repose
To careless bosoms near.
While she stood striving with despair,
And pouring her deep soul in prayer
Forth on the rushing storm.

Mrs. Hemans.

ANOTHER day elapsed, and another; and each time that the sun set without any change taking place, or any rumour of help from without cheering the cap-

tives' ears, it became harder for them to struggle against despair.

“Mother,” Mina said at last, as she threw her arms round Madame d'Au-

ban's neck, "may I go and look for my father? Let me slip out of the hut at night when nobody will miss me, and go to the country of the Choktaws, on the other side of the river. I am sure he is there."

"Why do you think so, Mina?" eagerly asked her mother, whose head had been drooping on her breast in heavy despondency, whose eyes were strained with watching, and whose ears had grown dull by the continual effort to catch a sound which might indicate the approach of the French.

"My brother Ontara says so. He has seen a man who told him that a white chief was raising a war-cry amongst the Choktaws, and that they are taking up arms. He will row me across the river if I can get away when it is dark, because he promised to do whatever I asked him; and he says a child of the sun always keeps his promises. He will show me which way to take, and in what direction to go. He cannot smoke the calumet to the Choktaws, because they are enemies of the Natches; but I am sure I shall find my father, and I will bring him back with me, mother."

"They watch us too closely, Mina. You know that our taskmistress sleeps with her back to the door of the hut, to prevent any chance of our getting away. I could not let you go alone, my child; but if this young Indian is indeed willing to favour our escape, I should be inclined to accept his aid."

"Ah! mother, they will not let us leave the hut; but there is a space between the planks just behind our mat, which I have been enlarging with my fingers, and by lying quite flat on the ground I think I could creep out, if you would give me leave."

Madame d'Auban shuddered, and threw her arms round her child. "Mina!" she exclaimed with agitation, "promise me not to stir from my side.

I forbid you to think of leaving me—not at present, at least. I must tell you, my child, that a great danger hangs over us. That poor foolish Madame Lenoir has been making a plot with the black slaves against our Indian masters. It cannot succeed, and if it is discovered we shall be probably all doomed to death. If the worst comes to the worst, I may bid you fly alone. I do not think they would kill you, but to leave you in their hands without me would be worse than death. Better that you should perish in the woods seeking your father than grow up amongst these savages. Mina, I may not have an opportunity of speaking to you again. One thing I have to say to you, which you must remember as long as you live. You are a Christian, and the child of European parents. You must never abandon your faith, and you must never marry an Indian."

Mina slipped off her mother's knees and stood before her, clasping her hands together.

"Then I shall never marry at all, mother, for I told Ontara that I could not be his wife, because you say that white girls must not marry their Indian brothers. But I also promised him that I would never marry a white man.

"That was foolish, my child," answered her mother. "You are too young to make such promises. They mean nothing."

"Mother, I am sure I shall keep that promise. I am sure it meant something."

Madame d'Auban felt annoyed at the little girl's earnestness, even though she tried to treat it as mere childishness. It was in keeping with the passionate affection she had always shown for the land of her birth and its native inhabitants.

"If I were to die, Mina, and you remained alone in this country, what would you do?"

"I would remember all you have taught me, mother, and I would try to be good."

"And if they tried to make you a heathen, like themselves?"

"They should kill me first."

There was at that moment in the child's face and manner so strong a resemblance to her father, that it took her poor mother by surprise. She bowed her head on her little daughter's bosom, as if seeking for support in that terrible hour from the brave heart in that child's breast.

Clasping each other in a mute embrace, they remained silent for an instant, and then Madame Lenoir came running towards them in wild affright.

"It is all over with us," she gasped out in an agonized whisper. "It was such a beautiful plot! and to think it should not have succeeded after all!" And she wrung her hands and lifted up her eyes, without attending to Madame d'Auban's anxious questions.

"Has it merely failed? or has it been discovered?" she tremblingly asked.

"Discovered! Yes, of course it has been discovered. One of those wretched negroes has betrayed us, and now we shall all be put to death. Oh! that it should have come to this, such a beautiful plot as it was! It put me in mind of the Conjuraton de Cinna at Théâtre Français. The traitor! the black monster! the wretch! . . . Madame d'Auban, you are like a statue, like a stone; you feel nothing."

"For God's sake, be silent; give me time to think," said Mina's mother, pressing her hands to her brow. She remained motionless awhile, and when she lifted up her eyes Ontara was standing before her. He was speaking in a low, rapid manner, with various gesticulations, to Mina.

"What does he say?" asked her mother, who did not well understand the Natches' language.

"He says that at midnight all the white women and children will be taken to the square in the middle of the village, and each tied there to a stake, and at sunrise they will burn them to death. He asked the Sun, his father, not to kill me, because I was his little sister, and that he loves me, but the Sun will not listen to him, and says the white-skins must all die. And I do not want to live, if they kill you, mother." She threw herself into her arms, and sobbed on her bosom. "But, oh! what will my father do?"

Again Ontara spoke urgently to the weeping child.

"What does he say? What does he say?" asked the distracted mother.

"He says if I will creep out of the hut through that hole to-night, before they carry us away to the square, that he will wait for me outside, and take me to his boat and across the river to the land of the Choktaws."

Madame d'Auban raised her heart to Heaven for help and for guidance. It was a dreadful moment. The agony of that decision was almost unbearable. She fixed her eyes with a wild, imploring expression on the young Indian's face. He seemed to understand the mute question, the imploring appeal. Quickly he drew the crucifix from his breast, made the gesture which according to Indian custom signifies an oath, and laid his hand on Mina's head.

Madame d'Auban knew that this meant a solemn promise of protection. She had seen that the boy had a good heart and a noble spirit. She instinctively found words in which to express, in a way he partly understood, that she would trust him; and Mina clung to her, and said, "Mother, do not be afraid; Ontara is good, and I will bring back my father in time to save you."

The shades of evening had fallen; the deepest silence reigned in the hut,

where the captives and the Indian companions were reposing. Repose—strange word for such an hour of mortal agony as one of those human beings was enduring, as she lay motionless on the mat with her child by her side! She clasped her hand in her own, as if to make sure she was not gone; but go she must, for the words which Ontara had spoken were true, and the doom of the captives had been pronounced. A reckless woman's fatal imprudence had done its work, and the whole tribe of the Natches risen in wild fury. They would have slain their victims at once, had it not been that they rejoiced in the anticipation of their protracted sufferings. Already the European and negro slaves were being dragged from the huts of their masters, and led to the centre of the village, where the sachems were assembled. The Indians were brandishing their tomahawks, erecting stakes, and carrying ropes wherewith to bind their victims. The tramp of their feet, the sounds of wailing from the women, and the cries of children, were heard in the portion of the palace where Madame d'Auban was confined. She felt there was no time to lose. Her lips were pressed close to Mina's ear. "My child," she whispered, "the time is come when I must trust you to God and to your guardian angel. Remember, my daughter, your mother's last words. Do not cry, my own; the least sob might be heard. Be always good, Mina, and the Blessed Virgin will be thy mother. God bless thee, dearest! Now, creep away; God bless thee; God guide thee!" One long, silent, ardent, passionate embrace, and then, by the light of the moon shining through the planks of the hut, the mother watched the child gliding out through the narrow opening in its wall.

She was gone. Gone whither? gone with whom?—a young savage for her

guide. Had she been mad, to part with her thus? Her heart almost ceased to beat. She stretched herself on the ground near the opening through which the child had passed, and gazed on the meadow illumined by the brilliant moonlight. Distinctly she discerned Mina's figure, bounding over the dewy grass with the swiftness of a young antelope, and keeping pace with the Indian, who had joined her. The two forms on which her strained eyes were gazing, disappeared from her sight. They plunged into the thickets which led to the river. She turned round and hid her face in the heap of dried leaves on which the child's head had rested a moment before, to stifle the least sound from passing her lips, to still, by a strong effort, the agony which was convulsing her frame.

It was almost a relief when they came to fetch her away from the hut. No great search was made for Mina. The woman who was set to guard the captives said a few words to the messengers, which apparently accounted for her absence. She made a show of zeal, however, by showering reproaches on Madame d'Auban, and dragging her roughly to the door of the hut. To the mother's heart ill-usage was welcome; the sight of the stakes to which women and children were being bound, the cruelty of the Indians, their savage glee, a strange sort of consolation. Had her own life been spared, the thought that she had sent her child unguarded, save by her Indian playmate, into the wilderness, would have maddened her. Now that she was herself about to die, she felt she could commit her without reserve to God's protection; now she could murmur with intense gratitude, "She is gone, she is gone;" and her mental vision fixed itself with an intensity which was almost like sight on the thought of the crucifix on the breast of her

young guide. Through the long hours of that terrible night, the Christian heroine bore her lofty part, and during the next dreadful day, and when the shades of evening fell, and again through the night, which was to be the last to so many human beings doomed to perish at sunrise—in the full light of the glorious, majestic sun, the noblest of God's inanimate works, the object of idolatrous worship to the heathen murderers gathered around them, the silent witness of men's errors and men's crimes. She forgot herself; she forgot her absent husband and her fugitive child, in the intense, all-absorbing desire to prepare for death and judgment her companions in adversity; she found strength to raise her voice and speak of hope to the perishing, of pardon to the guilty. She repeated aloud acts of faith, of love, and of contrition; she said that Mary was praying and Jesus waiting; that one word, one sigh, one upward glance was enough to win heaven in that hour; and as the Indians danced, as was their wont, around their victims, and made the air resound with their songs of savage glee, her voice still rose above their discordant cries, her prayers filled up every pause in their dreadful merriment, and grace was given her to do an angel's work in the midst of those breaking hearts and those infuriated men.

The remaining hours of life were waning fast. The prisoners were to die at sunrise, and the first faint light of morning was beginning to dawn in the sky. Many of the Indians set to guard the prisoners, who were, however, tightly bound to their respective stakes, had fallen asleep, having largely indulged throughout the night in the "fiery essence," as they called brandy, which they had brought away in great quantities from the French fort. Madame d'Auban was still speak-

ing, in a feeble, exhausted manner, to poor Madame Lenoir, whose cries of despair had subsided into weary groans, when she heard a voice close behind her, and turning round, as much as the ropes with which she was bound allowed, she saw Osseo, with a knife in his hand, standing half concealed from sight.

"Daughter of the white man," he whispered, "where is Mina? I will cut these ropes and show thee how to escape whilst these men sleep, if thou wilt tell me where I can find her."

"The Great Spirit alone knows where she is now," answered Madame d'Auban, shuddering at the expression of Osseo's face.

"Do not talk to me of the Great Spirit, or of your detested prayer. I want Mina; and I have in my bosom a fetish which will help me to find her, if thou dost refuse to tell me where she is, and thou art going to die." He added, in a mocking tone, "The fire is even now being kindled which will shrivel thy white limbs, as the flame burns up the wood of the forest. Tell me where Mina is, and I will save thee."

Madame d'Auban feebly shook her head; her strength was quite exhausted.

"I will search for her all over the land," the young savage cried, brandishing a tomahawk; "and if thou hast sent her across the great salt lake, I can row a swifter boat than man has ever yet made."

The mother closed her eyes, and heard the sound of his retreating steps; and then for a while the silence was unbroken, save by the groans of the prisoners and the heavy snoring of their drunken foes.

The next time she opened her eyes the sun was illuminating the mountain tops.

"Glorious orb of day! harbinger of death," she murmured. "Blessed be thy light shining on our painful way

to heaven! Blessed be thy rays warming our limbs, as the love of Jesus warms our hearts! Darkness is still brooding over the plain, but the heights are even now resplendent with light; the shadows of death at hand, the glory of heaven shining beyond them. O my God! Thou dost, indeed, send thy messenger before Thee! My beloved ones, farewell!"

Her head fell on her breast; she neither moved nor spoke, but silently prepared for death. Hark! what was the sound which fell upon her ear, like the splash of rain-drops on the leaves of the forest, like the footfall of watchers near a dying man's bed? Can a band of armed men tread so lightly? Can a troop of warriors steal along with so noiseless a progress? Yes, for they are of the swift, light-footed tribe of the Choktaws. They are the deep divers, the wily hunters of the Western Prairies. They track the wild beast to his den, and surprise the alligator in his sleep by the river side. And they have listened to the white man's appeal. In their own tongue they have heard him tell his dreadful tale. There has been a long hereditary feud between them and the children of the Sun, and their hatred of the Natches has kindled into a flame, on hearing of the murder of the black-robe; for the Père Souël had been amongst them and spoken of "the prayer of the Christians," and they had answered, "It is well; we have heard your words, and we will think on what you tell us." At the voice of the stranger they have risen as one man. Seven hundred warriors performed the dance of war, and pledged themselves to the rescue of the white men's wives and children. From the villages and the solitary wigwams, from the hills and from the plains, they emerged and joined the white leader, and crossed the great river by the light of the crescent moon.

As the day dawns in the east they draw near to the City of the Sun. In silence they advance. If they speak, it is under their breath. D'Auban marches at the head of the red warriors, the only stranger amongst them—the only one for whom more than life or than fame is at stake. He feels in himself the strength to struggle with a thousand foes, and yet the stirring of a leaf makes his heart beat like a woman's. It was such a terrible suspense—such an agonizing uncertainty! His eyes strive to pierce the dewy mist which hides from him the distant view. They grow dim with straining, those burning, tearless eyes, and the tangled boughs and the feathery branches of the forest take odd, fantastic shapes, which mock his yearning sight. In the dim vista of an opening in the wood he fancies that he sees two figures advance. No; one is advancing and the other recedes, and after a while disappears. But that something white which approaches, what is it? Is the mist thickening, or his slight failing? He can discern nothing. But a voice, a cry, reaches his ear. "Father! Oh, Father!" He rushes forward, and Mina is in his arms. The band of warriors gathers round them.

"Your mother? Where is your mother?"

"She sent me away; I crept out of the hut. Make haste; make haste!"

"Is she safe? Is she well? How have they treated you?"

"Well, till last night. Make haste, father; make haste! The sachems were very angry when my mother sent me away."

D'Auban took up his little daughter in his arms as if she had weighed but a feather, and strode forward. He could have carried three times her weight and not have felt it, so intensely strained was his nervous system. But suddenly halting, he turned to the In-

dians and said—"My brothers, the Great Spirit has sent this child to meet us. The Great Spirit is with us, and will bless my Indian brothers for the deed they do this day."

A whisper went through the warriors' ranks.

"The white maiden," they said, "was come from the Great Spirit to lead them to the City of the Sun;" and onward they pressed through the tangled thickets, grasping their weapons like the hunter who discerns the footsteps of his prey.

The wood is passed at last, and the open plain lies stretched before them. They see the white wigwams of the Natches' city amongst the oleander and acacia groves. Another hour's march and they will have reached it. D'Auban calls one of the Indians.

"My brother Pearl Feather," he says, "take this child, and stay with her in this spot. If we succeed we will send for you from yonder city, to sing with us the song of victory; but if the night comes and no tidings reach you, then say 'My white brother is dead,' and take the child to the black robe of the nearest mission, or to the French in the south, and the Great Spirit will bless thee, my brother, and show thee the way to the land of the hereafter."

"I will not leave you, father," Mina cried, convulsively grasping her father's arm; "let me run by your side. I could keep up with Ontara, let me stay with you."

"Mina, in God's name, and as your father, I command you to remain here." He had spoken as if in anger, and the child flung herself on the ground in a paroxysm of grief. He did not trust himself to look back. He went on, for every minute was a matter of life and death; and the fair-haired child remained lying on the greensward motionless as a marble image, pale as a broken lily, refusing to be comforted

by the Indian, who tried in vain to direct her thoughts to other objects than the onward march of that little band towards the city where the lives of both her parents were hanging on a thread.

The hour had arrived when the sachems were to assemble in the square to witness the execution of the European captives. The gong which was to summon them was to have sounded when the sun rose, but the sleeping guards awoke from their drunken slumbers to witness a far different scene. Weapons were brandished in their eyes and over their heads. Flames were bursting forth from various buildings in the town. The wigwams were set on fire in every direction, and d'Auban's warriors had encircled the square, whilst he rushed to the stakes and cut the cords which bound the prisoners.

A cry of rage and terror arose from the affrighted city. The whilom triumphant Natches now rent the air with their howls of fury. They rushed about in wild confusion, some to oppose their enemies, the number of which they could not discern, so utter had been the surprise, so swift and stealthy their approach,—some to extinguish the flames which were extending over the village, and threatened the chief's palace.

D'Auban had caught his wife in his arms just as she was sinking to the ground. "Mina?" she had just strength to murmur.

"She is safe," he answered. "Bear up for a while, my beloved one. The lives of all these helpless ones depend on the event of this hour." Then assuming the direction of the assailing force, he assigned to a hundred men the task of conveying the women and children to the shore, where boats had been previously sent to await them. He despatched a man to the spot where he had left his child under the care of her Indian protector, with orders to

proceed at once to the river side. With his remaining force he kept the enemy engaged, and dreadful was the fierce encounter between the two tribes. Many a Natches fell under the blows of the more warlike Choktaws; but the struggle was an unequal one, and if prolonged must have turned to the advantage of the Children of the Sun, who were beginning to recover from their surprise and hurrying from every side to join the conflict. D'Auban's superior military skill enabled him to conduct the retreat of his band, and to cope successfully with their far more numerous pursuers. He had sent a messenger to Fort Rosalie, and had hoped that a French force might have been despatched in time to meet him; but a keen-eyed Indian who surveyed the country from one of the neighbouring heights could discern no sign of their approach, and he determined on effecting if possible the rescue of the captives without attempting to maintain their position in the Natches' city, which they had, as it were, taken by storm. The Choktaw Indians, like the Parthians of old, discharged their arrows at their enemies as they retreated, and d'Auban with the musket which had already done him such good service kept them also at bay. At the sight of the murderous weapon the pursuers fell back. Their missiles made havoc the while amongst the rescuing party, and many a Choktaw warrior remained stark and cold on the green slopes between the City of the Sun and the Father of Waters. At last the shore was reached, and whilst the gallant band under d'Auban's command faced the foe, the women and children were embarked in the boats and barges manned with rowers of the friendly tribe. Madame d'Auban's face turned as pale as ashes, for Mina was nowhere to be seen. Boat after boat was filled with women and children, and shot down

the stream, impelled by the rowers and aided by the current. But one remained. D'Auban and his Indians fought on; but how long would they remain by his side? How long were they to wait? How long would they shed their blood for the sake of that one missing child? Himself he felt his strength giving way, his arm waxing weak, his head growing dizzy. At that moment, the sky was lighted up by a lurid glare. The Natches looked back towards their homes, and saw the flames bursting out afresh from every grove and every temple of the City of the Sun. A cry rose to their lips; abandoning in tumultuous haste the pursuit, they retraced their steps, and rushed wildly back towards the burning town. At that moment also, staggering under a burden that was no longer a light one for the dying man who was bearing it, Pearl Feather, the swiftest runner of his tribe, fell breathless at d'Auban's feet. Mina was in her father's arms, and the Indian gasped out in feeble accents, "The bird of prey sought to carry away the dove, and his fetish has great power. But the Great Spirit of the Christian prayer was more powerful still. He gave me strength to bring her to thee, my white brother, and now depart and leave me to die."

Then d'Auban saw the arrow which was lodged in the Indian's breast, and guessed it was a poisoned one. For one moment he knelt by the true friend who had saved his child; and when the brave spirit passed away, the prayers and the blessing which followed it beyond this mortal scene were of those which are not spoken in words, but rise straight from the heart with speechless intensity.

The friendly Indians for the most part swam across the river and dispersed in the woods, bearing away with them as much as they could carry off the treasures stolen from the city during their brief invasion of its precincts.

The barge which held d'Auban, his wife and child, the corpse of her dead deliverer, and a few of their companions in the late combat, descended the river with all the swiftness possible under the circumstances. It was a wonderful escape the captives had had, and Mina's, perhaps, the most wonderful of all. Osseo had met her and her protector on the way to the river, and sought to detain the white maiden, who, he said, was a runaway slave from the chief's palace, and force her back to the town. Most likely he would have succeeded, for his strength was superior to that of an old man and a child, had not Ontara, who was also searching for Mina in every direction, arrived on the spot at that very moment and taken part with the fugitives. Osseo turned with fury on his new opponent, which gave the Indian time to fly with the little girl in his arms. Like an arrow from a bow, swiftly and straightly he crossed the plain, through the feathery grasses and waving fields of green maize. Already were the armed men on the river side and their boats there in sight, when a shaft, a poisoned one too, came whizzing through the air and struck him as he ran. No cry escaped his lips; he scarcely slackened his pace: but the child he was carrying felt he was wounded, and that his steps were faltering. She shut her eyes in anguish and called to him to stop, but he heeded her not; his lips faintly murmured a chant which was the death song of his tribe, but the words he set to it were those of the Christian prayer. His blood coloured the greensward up to the margin of the stream. He died silently at the feet of the friend whose child he had saved. No wonder that burning tears of gratitude and of sorrow fell on the lifeless form of the Indian, as he lay stiff and cold at the bottom of the boat which bore away the captives to safety and to freedom.

Three days afterwards sheltering walls enclosed the weary fugitives, and the call of French sentries, as they paced around the fort which had received them, sounded like music in their ears. D'Auban sat between his wife and child, looking at them with a tenderness too deep for words. He was beginning to feel the effects of the intense fatigue and excitement he had gone through. His weary limbs and overwrought mind were sinking with exhaustion. He was become gray-haired, and looked ten years older than when he had left St. Agathe. His wife recovered more quickly. At her age there is still an elasticity of spirits, which surmounts more speedily the effects of suffering than at a more advanced period of life; and though she had borne much anguish, she had not had, like him, to act under its intolerable pressure.

When Mina went to bed that evening she hid her face in the pillow, but her parents heard her sobbing as if her heart would break.

"What ails you, my child?" her mother tenderly inquired, whilst her father anxiously bent over her.

"I shall never see my brother again," cried the weeping child. "He has saved my life, and I love him better than any one in the world, except you both. I heard one of the soldiers say that the French were marching to the Natches' city, and would kill all its inhabitants. O father, they will kill my brother, who saved your life and mine!"

D'Auban was much affected at this thought, and at his daughter's well-founded fears. He assured her that as soon as they reached New Orleans he would go to the governor, and entreat him to send orders to the commandant of the French troops to save the life of the young chief Ontara, and to treat him with kindness.

"Let us go on at once, then," cried Mina, sitting up in her bed.

"We shall start to-morrow morning," said her mother. "Try and sleep, my child."

It was some days, however, before d'Auban recovered sufficiently to leave Bâton Rouge; but he sent a letter to M. Perrier by one of the soldiers of the fort. He felt great misgivings about the young Indian's fate, though he tried to calm Mina's fears and to divert her mind from the subject. If he had grown old in the space of a few days, his little girl had become almost a woman in thought and feeling during the same lapse of time. She did not play any more. Her mind was incessantly going over the past, or forming plans for the future, with an intense imaginative power which hastened in some respects the development of her character. The scenes she had gone

through; the memories they had left behind them; the sight of her father's enfeebled frame, and of the anxious looks her mother bent upon him; the uncertainty in which Ontara's fate was involved,—had a depressing effect on her affectionate and highly sensitive temperament. It was an abrupt transition from a life as joyous and as free as a child had ever led, to one too full of cares and conflicting feelings for one so young and so naturally thoughtful. As her spirits did not revive after their arrival at New Orleans, her parents resolved to place her for a while at the school of the Ursuline Convent, in the hope that regular habits of study and the society of girls of her own age would dissipate the depressing effects of the scenes she had witnessed. The results of this experiment were not at first very successful.

CHAPTER IV.

In the cruel fire of sorrow
Cast thy heart, do not faint or wall,
Let thy hand be firm and steady,
Do not let thy spirits quail,
But wait till the time is over,
And take thy heart again;
For as gold is tried by fire,
So a heart must be tried by pain.

Adelaide Proctor.

A thousand thoughts of all things dear,
Like shadows o'er me sweep;
I leave my sunny childhood here;
Oh! therefore, let me weep.

Mrs. Hemans.

ABOUT three months after the events related in the last chapter, a number of girls of various ages were playing amongst orange trees of the garden of the Ursuline Convent, with all the vivacity belonging to youth and the

French character. They had just obtained a holiday in honour of the news which had reached New Orleans, of the final suppression of the Natches insurrection by a body of French troops, and their patriotic exultation was at its

height. A handsome, clever-looking girl of fifteen jumped upon a bench, under a banana tree, and began to harangue the crowd which gathered round her. Emilie de Beauregard was a great favourite in the school, and before she opened her mouth the girls clapped their hands, and then cried out "Silence!"

"Mesdemoiselles!" she began, "let your French hearts rejoice! Your countrymen have gained a glorious victory! The royal flag, the white lilies of France, floats over the ruins of the city of the Sun." A round of applause saluted this exordium. The orator, warmed by success, went on. "The frustrated enemy bites the dust. They dared to kill Frenchmen; but now vengeance has overtaken them, and the rivers run with their blood."

"That was in our historical lesson this morning," whispered Julie d'Artaban to Rose Perrier.

"Never mind. Hold your tongue," answered the governor's daughter. "It is very fine."

"The houses of those monsters are a prey to the flames—not a corn-field or an orange garden remains in the plain where French blood has been spilt. These Indians are all as cruel as wild beasts, but now they are hunted down without mercy. Their princes, the Children of the Sun, as they call themselves, are all slain or sold away as slaves. Not one of their dark visages will ever be seen again in the land of their birth."

This was too much for one of the audience. There was a sudden rush to the bench. Mina d'Auban, with flashing eyes and crimson cheeks, had seized and overturned it, and the orator had fallen full length on the grass. This assault naturally enough made Mlle. de Beauregard very angry, and her friends and admirers still more so. Cries of "You naughty girl!" "You

wicked Indian princess!" (this was Mina's nickname in the school), resounded on every side.

"Fi donc! Mademoiselle," exclaimed Julie d'Artaban; and Rose Perrier, who had high ideas of administrative justice, ran to call Sister Gertrude, the mistress of the class.

The placid-looking nun found Mina crying in the midst of her excited and indignant companions, who all bore witness to the outrage she had committed.

"She pushed Emilie down because she was telling us the good news that the French have won a great victory."

"It is impossible to play with Mademoiselle d'Auban," said another. She flies into a passion if we say we like our own country people better than Indians and negroes."

"She said all the Indians are monsters," said Mina, sobbing; "and I think she is a monster herself to say so. Some of them are very good—better than white people." There was a general burst of laughter, which increased her exasperation, and she passionately exclaimed, "I hate white people!"

"Come with me, my child," said Sister Gertrude; "you do not know what you are saying. You must not remain with your companions if you cannot control your temper. Go and sit in the school-room alone for an hour, and I will speak to you afterwards."

Poor Mina's heart was bursting with grief and indignation; and her conscience also reproached her for her violence. She could not bring herself to forgive her companions, or to feel at peace with them. This conflict had been going on ever since she had been at school. The separation from her parents had been a hard trial. They had thought that the companionship of French children would divert her

mind from painful thoughts, and overcome her determined predilection for the Indians. But they had not calculated on the effect produced upon her by the unmitigated abhorrence her playmates expressed for the people she so dearly loved. Their hatred made no distinction between the treacherous Natches and the good Illinois Christians; and a rankling sense of injustice kept up her irritation. It was, perhaps, as natural that these girls, most of whom had lost friends and relations in the insurrection, should feel an antipathy for the Indians, as that Mina, with all her recollections of St. Agathe, and her gratitude and affection for Ontara and for Pearl Feather, should resent its expression.

But the result was, that instead of diminishing her overweening partiality for the land of her birth and its native inhabitants, her residence at school had hitherto only served to increase it. She also sadly missed the freedom of her earlier years. She was often in disgrace for breaches of discipline. The confinement of the classroom was trying to her; and she committed faults of a peculiar nature, such as taking off her stockings in order to cross barefooted the little stream which ran through the garden, and climbing up the trees to get a glimpse of the sea, the sight of which reminded her of the green waving fields of her home.

When Sister Gertrude entered the school-room she found her at first silent and sad, but by degrees her gentle manner and soothing words drew from the overburthened heart of the poor child the expression of her feelings; she understood them, and while blaming her violence, she made allowance for the provocation, and showed sympathy in the trial she was enduring. It was not only at school that Mina's sensitive nature was wounded by the absence of such sympathy: her father

and mother had suffered so terribly during the days of her captivity, and of his absence, that they involuntarily shrunk from every thing which reminded them of that time. They would have made every effort and every sacrifice in their power for the sake of the young Indian who had protected their child, and prayed daily for the brave man who had died to save her. But the mention of their names recalled such terrible scenes that they instinctively recoiled from it. Mina perceived this without quite understanding it. She had the quick tact to feel that though she was never told not to speak of them, the subject was evidently not a welcome one; and nobody could have guessed how much the child suffered from this tacit prohibition. St. Agathe, too, was not often alluded to by her parents. When she spoke of that beloved place, her mother looked sad and anxious. She watched her husband's looks with daily increasing anxiety. Yearnings for his native country, the home-sickness which sometimes so suddenly seizes exiles, joined to the early stages of a disease brought on by violent bodily exertions and mental anxiety, had greatly affected Colonel d'Auban's spirits, and Mina could not pour forth her thoughts in his presence with the same freedom she had been used to do. Nothing had been discovered as to Ontara's fate. Every inquiry had been made by d'Auban regarding the royal family of the Natches. He ascertained what had become of all its members except the two young men, Ontara and Osseo. They had either perished or taken refuge amongst some of the more distant tribes. A reward was promised for their capture, as it was deemed dangerous to allow any of the relatives of the great Sun to remain at liberty. But, at his friends' earnest entreaty, the governor gave orders, that if Ontara was arrested, he should be

treated with kindness and instantly brought to New Orleans.

It was a great consolation to Mina to relate all her story to Sister Gertrude on the day when matters had arrived at a crisis between her and her companions.

"You see, dear sister," she said, "I am an Indian girl, though my skin is white. I was born in the Illinois; and I only wish I was brown, and had black eyes and hair like my own people."

"But, my dear, that is not right. You are a creole, not an Indian. Your parents are French, and you ought to be glad that you are like them."

"And so I should be, sister, if the white girls loved the Indians; but they hate them, and I then want them to hate me also."

"But what a shocking word that is for Christians to use! I do not think your companions really hate these poor people. I am sure I hope not, for we are going to receive here to-morrow six little native orphan girls whose parents were killed in the insurrection. They were to have been sold as slaves, but our good mother begged them of the Company, and we are going to bring them up as Christians. This evening, after night prayers, I shall say a few words to our children, and tell them that for the love of Christ they should welcome and cherish these little outcasts. But Mina, my child, you should also remember that Anna Mirepoix's father, and Jeanne Castel's brother, and Virginia d'Aumont's uncle, have all died by the hand of the red men; and when they say things which make you angry, ask yourself what you would have felt if your father had been murdered and your mother burnt to death in the city of the Natches."

Mina threw herself into Sister Gertrude's arms, and shed tears of repentance for her fault, and of joy that the little brown orphans were coming to a

sheltering roof. From that day a new era began in her school life. The nuns had rightly judged that the best way of softening their pupils' feelings towards the unfortunate natives was to appeal to their pity, and enlist their sympathy in behalf of the orphans. The experiment proved successful. A few days after the one on which Emilie de Beauregard had tumbled off the bench in the midst of her harangue, she was sitting upon it with a brown baby on her lap, whilst Mina, kneeling before her, was amusing it with a bunch of feathers. Rose Perrier and Julie d'Artaban were quarrelling for the possession of another. All the girls were making Mina teach them Indian words, that they might know how to talk to the little savages, who became quite the fashion in the school. As to Mina, she was a mother to them all; the tiny creatures clung to her with an instinctive affection. During her lessons they would sit silent and motionless at her feet, with the patience which even in childhood belongs to their race, and followed her about the garden in the hours of recreation like a pack of little dogs. Every sweetmeat given to her was made over to them, and the only presents she valued were clothes or toys for her infant charges. Her health and spirits rapidly improved under this change of circumstances. She grew very fast, and was not very strong; but her colour returned, and bright smiles were again seen on her lovely face.

There are persons whose destiny it seems to have no lasting abode on earth; scattered workers, may be, or busy idlers, who, during the whole course of their lives, pass from one place to another, as if the wanderer's doom had been pronounced upon them. The place of their birth knows them no more. The homes of their childhood, the haunts of their youth, they never revisit. Every local attachment

they form is blighted in the bud. The curtain drops on each successive scene of their pilgrimage, and *finis* is stamped on almost every page of their existence. Some call this a strange fatality; others see in it, in particular instances, the hand of God's Providence training particular souls to detachment and self-sacrifice. "Le Chrétien est-il d'aucun lieu?" asks Emilie de Guérin, who was a genius, and perhaps a saint too, without knowing it.

Thoughts such as these, though scarcely put into shape, but vaguely floating through the mind, crossed Madame d'Auban, as she sat one evening planning with her husband the future course of their lives. It was almost determined between them that they should go to France. Many a sleepless night, many an hour of anxious thought, had she spent before making up her mind to propose this journey. It had, however, become evident that his illness was increasing, and that the best medical treatment could alone hold out a prospect of recovery. The physicians at New Orleans had pronounced that, within a few months, he would have to undergo an operation, and she could not endure the thoughts of trusting to the unskilful colonial surgeons. It seemed but too probable that he would not henceforward be equal to the labours and fatigue of a planter's existence; and the climate of Louisiana was daily reducing his strength and increasing his sufferings. She did not long hesitate, but with a cheerful smile proposed to him to sell the concessions, to part with St. Agathe! They had much increased in value during the last ten years, and their sale would realize a sum sufficient to insure them a small income. It was an effort and a sacrifice. St. Agathe was connected with the only happy period of her life. Her youth had revived in that beloved spot. There

she had known the perfection of domestic happiness—there she had been blest as a wife and a mother, and almost worshipped by all about her. She had walked the earth with her head erect, her voice undisguised, and her heart at rest. No fears, no misgivings, had disturbed her sunny hours, or marred her nightly rest in its green shades and amidst its simple inhabitants. Since her arrival at New Orleans, sudden tremors had sometimes seized her at the sight of persons whose faces she fancied were familiar to her. Or, if a stranger's eyes followed her in the streets—and this often happened, for her beauty was more striking than it had been even in youth; her movements were so full of grace, and her figure so majestic, that it was difficult for her to pass unnoticed—she hurried on with a beating heart, or hastily drew down her veil. Old heart-aches had returned—thoughts of the past were oftener in her mind. She heard the news of her sister's death in a casual manner, and could not tell even Mina of her grief. Her residence in the French town was a foretaste of what would henceforward be her lot if St. Agathe was sold. It was deliberately closing the gates of her earthly paradise; but then she knew that what had been for ten years a paradise could be so no longer. Neither her husband nor herself could ever forget what they had gone through. There are associations which can never be cancelled. The people, the language, even the natural beauties of America, could not be to them what they once were. No; it was not a sacrifice she was making—on second thoughts she became conscious of this; but it was setting the seal to a doom which was already past recall.

The news from Europe was also preying more and more upon her mind. Two years had elapsed since notice of

the Czar Peter's death had reached the colony; and now intelligence had just arrived of the Empress Catherine's decease. D'Auban had heard this one night at the governor's house, and had hastened home to tell his wife.

She anxiously asked, "And what of my son?"

"He has been proclaimed emperor, and Mentzchikoff has taken charge of his person and of the reins of government."

"Ah! I now understand why Catherine left him the crown, rather than to Anna Ivanovna. My poor child! in the hands of such men as Mentzchikoff and the Narishkins, what will become of him?"

"Was nothing more said?"

"No, that was all."

Madame d'Auban's lip quivered; and, gathering up her work, she hastened to a terrace which commanded a view of the sea—she felt a wish to be alone, to commune with herself on the news she had just heard; even her husband's presence was irksome at that moment. The forsaken child was uppermost in her mind; the change in his fate brought before her all kinds of new thoughts. He was now an emperor, a czar, that young boy whose face she so longed to see. She fancied the shouts of the people when he was proclaimed—the cries of "Long live Peter the Second!" They seemed to ring in her ears as the waves broke gently on the shore; and then she wondered if he ever thought of his mother; if he ever noticed her picture; and whether that picture was hanging in the same place as it used to do, above the couch where she was sitting on the day when the baby of a year old had been brought to see her for the last time. Her name was on the frame, Charlotte of Brunswick Wolfenbuttel, born in 1696. Had they engraved on it the day of her death? "He sees my picture," she

murmured; "and when he goes to church, he sees my tomb. Does he ever see me in his dreams? I have sometimes dreamt of him very distinctly, and have awoke just as he was going to speak to me. Oh, my boy emperor, my young czar, my crowned child, would not you, perhaps, give half your empire to have a mother, on whose bosom you might lay your fair young head, in whose arms you might find refuge from bad men and secret foes? And why should we not meet again? Why should there be an impassable gulph between us, now that the czar is dead and the empress also, and that my son, my own son, reigns in their stead?" As these thoughts passed through her mind, an ardent desire to return to Europe took possession of her; not that she formed any plan of regaining her position; not that she did not shudder at the thought of disclosing her existence, and at the dangers and misery to her husband and herself which such a step might involve in that old world, which, like M. de Talleyrand, thought mistakes worse than crimes, and *mésalliances* more degrading than sin. She would have died sooner than conceal her marriage; but secretly, perhaps, she might venture to approach her son. If the Countess de Konigsmark was still alive—it was two years now since she had heard from her—some communication might be made to the young emperor, which would reestablish her, not near his throne, indeed, but as a living mother in his heart.

She spoke to her husband of their vague thoughts and hopes, of the twofold reasons she now had to urge their return to France, and their decision was at last taken. D'Auban had doubted a long time; he had mistrusted his own intense longing to revisit his own country, and had felt afraid for his wife of a return to Europe; but an

accidental circumstance which occurred at that time, but which he kept from her knowledge, hastened his acquiescence. He had never mentioned to her the orders which had been sent out from Europe, for the apprehension of persons suspected of the robbery of her own jewels. The reports which had been circulated regarding M. de Cham-belle and herself had apparently died away since his death and her marriage, but he had never felt perfectly easy on the subject, and about this time he met in the streets Reinhart, the very man who had been most active in spreading them. The next day he saw him hovering near his house, as if watching its inmates. This circumstance determined him to leave the colony. A purchaser was found for the United Concessions, and St. Agathe was sold. They agreed to transmit to Paris the sum thus realized, and to proceed to France by the next vessel which should sail from New Orleans. Their intention was to spend there the time necessary for the treatment of his malady, and, when his health was reestablished, to seek for a post under government in some of the dependencies of France. The services he had rendered during the insurrection entitled him, he thought, to such an appointment; and he had friends who, he hoped, would lend him their assistance in advancing his claims. She nursed besides many a romantic vision, many a dream of a journey to Russia and a secret interview with her son; but these were silently indulged and cherished, not even her husband knew how much she built upon them.

It was with more than childish grief that Mina fixed her eyes on the coasts of America, as the "Ville de Paris" heaved her anchor, and the wind from the shore wafted the perfume of the orange flower from the gardens of the French colonists. Her mother sighed

as she saw the tears which filled her eyes, and sorrowfully asked herself if her daughter was destined to be always, like herself, a wanderer on the face of the earth.

"A year, mamma, is not that what you said?" whispered Mina, trying to smile. "A year, and then we shall return to St. Agathe?"

Madame d'Auban stroked her cheek without answering. She wished to keep from her the knowledge of the sale of St. Agathe, till the sight of other countries and the awakening of other interests had diminished the vividness of her recollections.

"Papa will be quite well in a year, and then we can go back; and what joy there will be in the Mission when we arrive! They will all come out to meet us with garlands and with songs, as they used to do when dear Father Maret and the hunters returned from the forests. We shall be so happy!"

She was hoping against hope, poor child. There was in her mind a suspicion of the truth, and she spoke in this way in order to be reassured. When she saw her mother did not answer, she slipped away and sat down alone in another part of the vessel. Her father went to look for her; she threw herself into his arms, hid her face in his breast, and wept—

Like a slight young tree, that throws
The weight of rain from its drooping boughs.
But when she raised her head again,

The cloud on her soul that lay,
Had melted in glittering drops away.
She had conquered her grief and gladdened his heart with one of her radiant smiles. The spirit which had made her, from a baby, a ruler among her companions, had been, during the last two years, trained and turned in another direction. The trials of her school-life had taught her to rule herself.

The arrival at a place we have not seen for many years, the sight of objects

familiar to us in our youth—of things we recollect, and of others which have changed the aspect of the picture imprinted in our memory, has generally something melancholy in it—sometimes only a pleasing sadness, sometimes a heavy gloom. When it is a quiet country landscape we gaze on, or a fine extensive view of sea and land, or a mountainous region half-way between us and the sky—such reminiscences are far less depressing than when they are connected with the busy haunts of men, the great thoroughfares of life. In a great city, when you enter a hotel and have nothing to do but to sit down and think, when every sight and sound is at once familiar and strange, when for many a long hour you are alone in the midst of an ever-rolling tide of human beings, the feeling of solitude is painfully oppressive: there is not a book on your table; no one knocks at your door; the postman brings you no letter; carriages roll in the street, but they do not stop; you mechanically listen to the increasing and decreasing noise as they approach, go by, and recede; you go to the window and watch the passengers, all intent upon something, and feel as if you, alone in the world, had nothing to do, and were stranded for the time being on the shore of the great stream of human life.

M. and Madame d'Auban experienced this very powerfully on the day when they took up their residence in a small lodging which a friend had engaged for them in one of the old-fashioned streets of the Faubourg St. Germain. To be once more in Paris, and to be there together, seemed so extraordinary. The commonplace aspect of every thing about them was in itself singular. D'Auban was very tired with the long journey, and so was Mina. He sat down near the window and fell into a fit of musing. Mina placed herself on a stool

at his feet and watched with a frowning countenance the carriages and foot-passengers; then she took out her pocket-book and wrote in it the following remarks: "August 5th, 1730. We are just arrived at Paris. It is a very ugly, melancholy place—not at all like the Illinois or Louisiana; it is like a great forest of houses. Men have made this forest, and Almighty God the great forests of the new world; I like best Almighty God's work. Papa and mamma do not look happy; and I do not like France. I do not agree with Mary Queen of Scots, who said, 'Adieu, pleasant pays de France.' I say, with a deep sigh, 'Bonjour, triste pays de France.' She had never seen the new beautiful France where I was born—where I used to lie down on the grass under the pine-groves, watching the sunshine through the green branches—where every one was kind to us. I want to go back." . . . The pencil dropped from the young girl's hand, and her head rested against her father's knee. She had fallen asleep. He picked up the pocket-book and read what she had written. A rather sad smile crossed his lips; then taking his daughter in his arms, he carried her into the back room and laid her on the bed without awaking her.

Madame d'Auban, meanwhile, was taking off her travelling dress and unpacking her things. Once, in passing before a looking-glass, she stopped and looked attentively at her own face. It was still a very beautiful one, and the expression of her matchless eyes was as lovely as ever—but of that she could not judge. It struck her that she looked much older, and that no one who had known her in former days would be the least likely to recognize her. "How foolish I am," she thought, "to be always so afraid of seeing people! I will try to feel and to do like others; to shake off my nervousness, and make

acquaintance with my husband's friends. If they ask me what my maiden name was, what shall I say?" She smiled to herself, and said, half aloud, "Mdlle. Désillinois."

When she went into the sitting-room, her husband raised his head languidly and said—"I wonder, after all, why we came here."

She looked at him anxiously, and sitting down by his side, answered, "Because I would come; because I care more for your health than for any thing else on earth. O my own! my own!" she exclaimed with passionate tenderness; "my beloved one! friend to more than human friendship true! what, without you, would life be to me?"

"No, no," d'Auban replied with a troubled look, and speaking in an agitated manner. "I ought not to have married you. I should have insisted on restoring you to your kindred."

"How can you speak in that way? it was impossible," said his wife, half impatiently.

"Oh, I don't know. Selfish passion often deceives us, and happiness hardens the heart. During all our years of bliss it never occurred to me that I had dealt unjustly by you; but since I have been ill, and have seen you wearing yourself out in nursing me, and since the horrible dangers you ran two years ago, a terrible self-reproach pursues me; it is that, as much as the climate, that has made me ill. . . ."

"And you let this go on without telling me that you had such a wrong, such a foolish thought! O Henri, I can hardly forgive you. . . ."

"What was the use of speaking? Have I not bound you to me by irrevocable ties? Have I not irreparably injured you? No, when every thing about you was bright and beautiful, and I could spend every hour in working and in planning for your happiness; when every one who came near

you loved you and was kind—as that dear child wrote in her journal a moment ago—it did not appear to me in that light. I did not regret for you the loss of a position which, but for me, you might yet regain. But here, in this mean lodging, where no one notices your arrival or gives you a welcome; you, who would once have been lodged in a palace and had princes and nobles at your feet; here, where I foresee what you may have to suffer with and for me . . . Oh, my dear heart, it is more than I can endure. . . ."

His wife laid her hand on his, and there was a tone of indignant tenderness in her voice as she replied, "Henri, banish, crush such thoughts as you would an unworthy temptation! They pain, they wrong me. What next to faith in Him is God's best gift to a woman? Is it not the love of a noble heart? To you I owe every joy I have known on earth, and under Him every hope of heaven. You have taught, consoled, instructed, and guided me. You saved my life, alas! at what a cost He knows, and so do I. What robbed you of your strength? what ruined your health? How can you talk to me of my kindred, of palaces and princes? Henri, are you not the light of my eyes, the beloved of my heart, dearer and better to me than ten sons? O God, forgive me!" she passionately exclaimed, falling on her knees; "forgive me if I have loved one of Thy creatures too much—if in my happiness I have not thought enough of my poor boy. If even now poverty, suffering with my husband is joy compared to the brightest fate on earth without him. O Henri!" she said, turning to him again, "you must have little known of my love to speak as you did just now. Never again say you have wronged me; I cannot bear it."

D'Auban was deeply moved, and

seized her hand. "Forgive me, my love, forgive me," he cried. "I did not mean thus to agitate you; but the wild thought did pass through my mind before you spoke that even now I ought to run the risk of being parted from you—that I ought to make your name and position known, and to relinquish the offer; yes, I thought it might be my duty, a blessing I do not deserve."

"What words are these, Henri? what evil spirit has whispered this accursed thought in my husband's ear? It did not reach your heart—by my own I know it did not. O hated France! detested Europe! poisonous air of an old corrupted world! Sooner had we both died by the hands of the Natches, sooner perished on the shores where we first met and first loved, than that you should deem it possible we should part. Listen to me, Henri. If in the first days of our happiness, when there was not a gray hair on your head, when your arm was so strong that you could carry me like an infant over the streams of St. Agathe, I should have refused to separate from you even for the sake of my son, or for any other affection or interest in the world, do you think I would do so now, when your strength has been spent for me, and that during twelve blessed years I have learnt every day to love you more? Do you not remember that that God, the God whom you have taught me to know and serve, has said that those whom He has joined together men may never sunder? But we have been talking like two foolish creatures—you to frighten me so uselessly, and I to take it to heart and answer you seriously."

"Well," said d'Auban, with a half-sad, half-pleased smile, "I believe it was a fit of insanity; and yet—"

"A good night's rest will restore your senses, dearest heart; and to-morrow you must go and see your friends

the d'Orgevilles, and prepare to introduce to them your wife; and we must find out who is the best physician we can consult, and then begin to see a little of this wonderful city. Mina, and I too indeed, will stare at every thing like savages. I must also learn a little French housekeeping. Our hostess will put me in the way of it. She has promised to show us the way to St. Sulpice to-morrow morning. You must lie in bed and rest. But when once Mina has been into a church, she will feel at home in Paris, and not consider it quite such an uncouth place as she does to-day."

D'Auban smiled more gaily, and during the rest of the evening watched her light and graceful movements as she passed from one room to the other, unpacking their clothes and books, and gradually giving a more cheerful look to the dingy little apartment. He thought she looked so like a princess, that it seemed to him difficult the world should not recognize the imprint of royalty on her fair brow and graceful form.

The next day he went to the Hôtel d'Orgeville, and was shown into the same salon where, so many years ago, he had spent hour after hour. Scarcely an article of furniture had been moved from the place in which he remembered it. The red velvet sofas and high-backed chairs, and the fauteuil where the mistress of the house used to sit when she received company of an evening; the antique cabinets with folding doors, and the étagères loaded with china; the portraits on the walls—every thing was looking just as it did on the night when he had conversed about emigration with M. de Mesme and M. Maret, and for the first time thought seriously of going to America.

When Madame d'Orgeville came into the room, he perceived that her face, if

not her furniture, bore witness to the lapse of years. Her hair had turned white, and rouge supplied the place of her former bloom. Nothing could be more cordial than her greeting.

"Ah! my dear colonel," she exclaimed, seizing both his hands, "how charmed I am to see you! What centuries it is since we have met! and how many things have happened! But you are not looking well?"

"I am very far from well," he answered. "We colonists go in search of fortune, madame, and often lose health, the greater blessing of the two."

"And have you made your fortune?"

"Not any thing to boast of—a livelihood, my dear friend, nothing more. The Natches' insurrection depreciated the value of property in New France at the time I was obliged to sell. As soon as I get well, I intend to try and obtain employment in the colonies—if possible in the Antilles."

"You do not mean, then, to return to Louisiana?"

"No, madame, not if I can help it."

"I am not surprised at that, after all you went through, and the terrible scenes you witnessed, your wife and child so nearly perishing, and your arriving only just in time to rescue them and the other captives. I assure you it was much spoken of at the time, and you are considered quite a hero. So many people will be wanting to see you, I expect you will be quite the fashion. M. Maret showed us the interesting account you wrote to him of his brother's death. By the way, you will meet him if you come here this evening. He may be of use to you about the appointment you want. He is in high favour at present with mon-sieur le prince."

D'Auban could scarcely refrain from smiling—it was so exactly the same thing over again, as in past years. Be-

fore he had time to answer, Madame d'Orgeville went on:

"And now tell me about your marriage. Madame d'Auban is French, I suppose?"

"Her mother was a German. Her father's name was M. de Chambelle. I suppose you never heard of the family; but I assure you that she is une demoiselle de très-bonne maison."

"And a good parti, I hope."

"She brought me, as her dower, a concession of some importance, which, had my health allowed me to remain in America, might have proved valuable; but we sold every thing before leaving America."

"And you have a daughter?"

"Yes, a little creole of twelve years old, who looks at least fifteen. I hope you will let me introduce her to you."

"Most willingly. And now that I think of it, my carriage is at the door. Allow me to reconduct you to your home, and then I may have, perhaps, at once the pleasure of making Madame d'Auban's acquaintance."

D'Auban assented, for he thought that the sooner his wife got over the nervousness she felt at the sight of strangers the better it would be, and his intimate friends she must needs see during her stay in Paris. Madame d'Orgeville wished to show her old friend every kindness, but she was also very curious to see his wife. Some of her acquaintances, who had been at New Orleans, had spoken in terms of admiration of her grace and beauty; but she did not trust to their taste, and was anxious to judge for herself before inviting her to her house.

She was taken by surprise, not so much by Madame d'Auban's beauty, as by the singular distinction of her manner, and the pure and refined French which she spoke. With the freedom of Parisian manners, and the privilege which people who are at the head of a

coterie sometimes assume of saying whatever comes into their head, she exclaimed, in the midst of her conversation with her, "Good heavens! how handsome you are, madame, and what perfect French you speak! Quite the language of the Court, with only a shade of German accent. And your manners, your voice, your whole appearance! I assure you I should have thought you had always lived in Paris."

Madame d'Auban smiled; but Mina, who was being led into the room at that moment by her father, heard Madame d'Orgeville's words, and deeply resented them. "Why should not mamma be beautiful?" she thought, "and why should she not be perfect in every way, though she has not lived in this odious Paris?" Mina's face was one of those which a frown becomes almost as much as a smile, and when, after kissing her on both cheeks, Madame d'Orgeville called her a charming creole, the indignant look which she put on made her look so pretty, that that lady, during the rest of her visit, could hardly take her eyes off her. "She is quite as pretty as Madame de Prie," she thought, "and with an expression of purity and innocence such as I have never yet seen. That face will make her fortune, if it does not prove her ruin. I am rather glad my daughters are not so strikingly beautiful. I believe the safest thing for a woman is to be tolerably good-looking, and have a good dowry." Whilst these reflections were passing through her mind she was, with that wonderful power some people possess of being engrossed with two subjects at once, most earnestly recommending to Madame d'Auban a physician of the name of Lenoir, who, she assured her, was one of the first medical men in Paris. She ended by inviting them all to dinner for the next day, and pro-

posed that Mina should spend the afternoon with her daughters and some of their friends.

That afternoon proved a beautiful one. The weather was warm without being hot, the sun shining brightly, and the sky cloudless. The garden of the Hôtel d'Orgeville was full of autumnal flowers, choice roses and China asters. The trees were beginning to put on their brown and red colouring, and the grass plot in the centre was studded with buttercups and daisies.

Mina, who for months had not seen a garden, and scarcely a flower, was in ecstasies. The wearisome sea voyage had been succeeded by the journey to Paris in a close diligence, and two days in the *entresol* of the Rue des Saints-Pères. If she had been alone, her delight would have been unbounded. As it was, she could not resist taking a run across the grass, and timidly asking Julie d'Orgeville if she might gather some buttercups—a permission which was graciously granted, with a rather supercilious smile, for Mdlle. d'Auban was half a head taller than Mdlle. Julie, and for a girl of that height she deemed it rather a childish amusement. The young ladies sat down on a semicircular stone bench at the end of an alley of plane-trees, and began to converse in an undertone, which gradually rose to a higher key, as the subjects under discussion became more interesting. A little girl of ten years of age asked what they were going to play at.

Mademoiselle d'Orgeville said, "We most of us prefer conversation; but you may, if you like, propose to the younger part of the society to play at ladies."

"What will she do?" said the leader of the younger ones, pointing to Mina.

"What would you like best, Mdlle. d'Auban?" asked Julie, with great civility.

"What do you do when you play at ladies?" inquired the latter, raising

her large blue eyes from the flowers she had on her knees.

"Oh, one is Madame la Duchesse, and another Madame la Princesse, and another Madame la Marquise, and so on."

"Then one, you know, has *les grandes entrées* at Court," cried a little girl.

"And the duchesses have tabourets," said another.

"And then we stand at the door of the arbour, and pretend it is the queen's dressing-room; and we go in according to our ranks and stand by her Majesty; and Madame la Duchesse hands her her shift, if there is no one of higher rank in the room; but if one of the princesses comes in, she, of course, gives it up to her. . . ."

"Which is to be the queen?" asked Mina, looking round the circle.

"We always draw lots for that. By the way, do you know, mesdemoiselles, that my mother says that yesterday, at the funeral of the Princesse de Conti, Madame la Duchesse de Boufflers pushed by, and would not let Mademoiselle de Clermont sprinkle the corpse before she had done so herself. But she had all the trouble in the world to prevent it."

"But my papa says that it is quite ridiculous to suppose that duchesses have that right."

"Then your papa is mistaken, mademoiselle. And if I play at going to Court to-day, I shall be Madame de Boufflers, and nothing shall induce me to yield up that point."

"Well, all I know is that I went to see Mdlle. de St. Simon yesterday, and that she says the pretensions of the Duchesse de Boufflers are quite shocking, and that she should never have taken precedence of Mademoiselle de Clermont, who was representing the Queen."

"Who cares what that ugly girl says? She is like a note of interrogation—a little crooked thing, always asking

questions, or laying down the law like the cross old duke her father."

"Would you like to be the queen, Mademoiselle d'Auban? You may if you like," said the leader of the youthful band.

"No, thank you," answered Mina; "I should not know how to behave." She thought of her grassy throne, and her sable courtiers who used to call her their chief, in the green prairies far away; but that was not like playing at being the queen of France, and she said she should like better to stay where she was, and to tie up her buttercups.

An animated conversation was carried on by the elder girls, which chiefly related to their various prospects, and the intentions of their parents with regard to their establishment in life. Some were already engaged to be married, though they had never seen their future husbands. Some were to be married as soon as a suitable alliance could be found for them. Some hoped, and some feared, they might have to go into religion. They talked of the good luck of one of their friends, who had become the wife of a gentleman whose position at Court would enable her to take precedence of her sister, who had wedded, the year before, a wealthy juriconsulte, a cousin of the Messieurs Paris. One young lady they mentioned, Alice le Pelletier, was actually about to be married to the son of a duc et pair. "But then, you know, she is immensely rich," said Julie d'Orgeville, "and her mother was a Beaufort. Do your parents intend to marry you in France, Mademoiselle d'Auban?" she asked of Mina, who answered with simplicity—

"I don't think they mean to marry me at all."

"Are you, then, going into religion?"

"I have never thought of it," Mina said.

"I suppose you have thought of very

little yet, my dear, but playthings and sweetmeats," said Julie, good-humouredly, but in rather a contemptuous manner.

Mina blushed, but made no reply. How little the elder girl knew of the depths of thought and feeling in the soul of that child, who had gone through more emotions, and waged more inward battles, and exercised more virtues already, than she had ever dreamt of in her limited sphere of thought and action! Julie d'Orgeville was not without amiable qualities, and her principles were good; so were those of many of the young girls gathered together on that occasion. Some of them eventually became excellent wives and mothers, and exemplary fervent nuns. But they were impregnated for the time with the levity and the prejudices of the worldly society to which they belonged, and reflected in a childish form the aspect it presented.

Mina felt miserably at a loss in their company. They were neither like women nor like children. She could not reach high enough, or descend low enough, to be on a level with them; hers had been such a totally different training. Crime and virtue, innocence and guilt, are perhaps less strange to each other, as far as sympathy goes, than worldliness and unworldliness. Erring souls sometimes appreciate goodness. Where there is guilt there is often remorse, and remorse is feeling. But the worshippers of rank, fashion, and wealth look with a comfortable sense of superiority on those who do not adore the same idols as themselves. A worldly child sounds like a singular anomaly, but the thing exists, and the principles of worldliness are never so broadly displayed as in such cases; for childhood is consistent; thoughts, words, and actions are all in accordance. Plausibility is the growth of a more advanced period of life; a slowly-

acquired quality which it requires time to mature.

Mina's parents felt in some ways a little at home in the salon of the Hôtel d'Orgeville as she did in the school room. After so long an absence they were not conversant with the state of parties such as it existed at that time in Paris, or with the intrigues which were carried on in the court and in the town. The tone of society often astonished them. People who were reckoned good said very strange things in those days, and allowed themselves an extraordinary latitude of thought and speech. D'Auban had left Paris at the end of the reign of Louis XIV. The whole period of the Regency had gone by during his absence, and impressed on French society dire traces of its influence. His wife had witnessed in Russia crime and brutality, degrading vices and coarse buffoonery, but the polished iniquity, the ruthless levity of Parisian manners was new to her. They were also no doubt changed themselves by the solitary earnest lives they had led, by the holy joys and sacred sorrows they had experienced, and felt more deeply than others would have done the pain of witnessing the increasing immorality and irreligion of the higher classes of French society; of hearing the praises of vile miscreants and poisonous writings from the lips of men who still believed in Christianity, who went through the forms of religion, and summoned priests to their deathbeds; of watching the rising tide of corruption which was to widen and deepen for fifty years till the foundations of the throne and the altar fell to the ground, and the deluge of the revolution swept away every landmark. The epoch in question was indeed the beginning of that terrible end, and more trying perhaps to the true of heart than the fatal consummation which, with all its horrors and its

sufferings, gave evidence of the faith and goodness latent in many of those who had sported on the brink of the precipice, but when it opened under their feet became martyrs or heroes.

The 18th century is a sad picture to look back upon, but in the midst of all its sin and growing unbelief what redeeming instances of virtue and purity mark the pages of its history! Where can more admirable models be found of true and undefiled religion than in the wife, the son, and the daughter of Louis XV.? In the same palace, under the same roof as Madame de Pompadour, Marie Leckzinska, the Dauphin, his Saxon wife, and Mesdames de France served God and loved the poor with a humble fidelity and patient perseverance which surprise us when we read their biographies and remember the age and the Court in which their lot was cast.

At the time when Madame d'Auban was in Paris, the young king of France was still devoted to his wife. With an open brow and a bright smile he would say, when another woman's beauty was insidiously commended in his presence, "She is not, I am certain, as handsome as the queen." So he thought and felt as long as the wickedness, of his courtiers and their vile instruments had not seduced him from his allegiance to his gentle wife. But they laid their plans with consummate skill. They carried them on with diabolical art; they took advantage of his weakness; step by step they dragged him down into the abyss of degradation in which his latter years were sunk. They turned the idol of his people, the well-beloved of a great nation, into the abject slave of Madame Dubarry, the mark of a withering scorn, the disgrace of a polluted throne.

Is there a greater sin, one that cries more loudly to heaven for vengeance, than the cold-blooded, deliberate de-

sign of ruining the happiness and poisoning the peace of those whose own souls are not only at stake, but whose example may influence thousands for good or for evil? Who can foresee the consequences of such guilt, if successful? Who can say that the crimes of the French Revolution, the murder of an innocent king, the more than murder of his consort and his sister, the tortures of his hapless child, will not be laid on the Day of Judgment at the door of those who conspired to ruin the domestic happiness of Louis XV., and to drag him down to the level of their own ignominy? God forgive them; though we can scarcely add, "They knew not what they did!"

Thoughts akin to these were in Madame d'Auban's mind, and made her woman's heart throb with indignation when she heard one day in Madame d'Orgeville's salon, a group of men and women of the world turning into ridicule the king's affection for the queen, and predicting, with exultation, that, thanks to the manoeuvres of the Ducs d'Epéron and de Gesore, and the dawning charms of Madame de Mailly, it would not be of long duration. She had known the pangs of desertion, the anguish which hides itself under forced smiles, the utter helplessness of an injured wife, more helpless on or near a throne than in a cottage, because her sufferings are watched and her tears counted.

"Poor queen," she inwardly exclaimed, "poor Marie Leckzinska! If a man stabbed thee to the heart he would be broken on a wheel; but how many assassins there are who are not punished in this world!" Monsieur Maret was sitting by her at that moment; she said a word or two which showed on what subject her thoughts were running. "But would it have been possible to expect," he answered, "that the

queen should go through life without some great sufferings? Is there not always some striking compensation to be looked for in the destiny of a person who has been singularly favoured by fortune? Picture to yourself, if you can, madame, a more unexampled instance of good luck than hers."

"It remains to be seen," said Madame d'Auban, "if, after all, her unforeseen elevation to the throne proves so great a blessing. But explain to me, sir, how it happened that the penniless daughter of a dethroned sovereign should have become the bride of Louis XV."

"The Duc de Bourbon, or rather Madame de Prie, who rules in his name, considered that the future queen might prove a dangerous element of opposition to his ministry if he did not secure her allegiance to him by the tie of gratitude. And so they bethought themselves of the daughter of King Stanislaus, whom the regent had permitted out of charity to inhabit an old mansion half in ruins in Weissenburg. Conceive the moment when this poor king opened the Duc de Bourbon's letter, perhaps fearing an order to leave France within twenty-four hours, and then found it contained a proposal of marriage from the King of France to his daughter! From the King of France! who had just sent back an infant, and for the sake of whose alliance every monarch in Europe would have given one of his fairest provinces. I wonder he did not die of joy!"

"I wonder what *she* felt," ejaculated Madame d'Auban, who was thinking of the day when her own father had said to her, "My daughter, I wish you joy. The Czar Peter has chosen you from amongst thirteen German princesses to be the Czarovitch's bride."

"The Duc d'Antin has told us that Stanislaus went straight into the room where his wife and daughter were

mending their linen, and said, 'Let us kneel down and thank God.' 'O dear father!' the princess exclaimed. 'are you restored to the throne of Poland?' 'No, my daughter; it is something better than that. You are Queen of France.' She had just been refused by the Duke of Baden! D'Antin went to Strasburg with the Duc de Beauvilliers to compliment the bride. He had to make a speech and he committed a comical blunder, an egregious one for such a courtier! In his address to the Princess he said that M. le Duc might have chosen a Queen of France amongst his own sisters, but virtue was what he was seeking for, and he knew where to look for it. Mlle. de Clermont, who is mistress of the Princess's household, was standing behind her chair, and whispered to the person next to her, 'What does M. d'Antin take us for, my sisters and myself?'"

Madame d'Auban smiled, and was going to make some observation in reply, when the door was thrown open and his Excellency the Russian Ambassador was announced.

D'Auban had ascertained that the persons composing the Russian Embassy at Paris had none of them been at St. Petersburg at the time when they could have seen his wife. Still he looked towards her with uneasiness when Prince Kourakin came in. He saw her colour at the first moment, and then turn very pale. There were not many persons in the room. When the ambassador had paid his compliments to the mistress of the house, the conversation became general.

M. d'Orgeville asked if there was any news.

"Great news from my court," said Prince Kourakin. "I have just received despatches containing the announcement of a *coup d'état* at St. Petersburg."

"What! what!" exclaimed several

persons, amongst whom was d'Auban, who saw his wife's eyes fixed upon Prince Kourakin with intense anxiety.

"Mentzchikoff is overthrown and on his way to Siberia!"

"Incredible! wonderful!" cried Madame d'Orgeville. "What an important event! Whose doing is it?"

"Our Imperial Master's. Mentzchikoff had, as you know, betrothed him to his own daughter and kept him in a state of absolute subjection. The Czar could not walk, or ride, or eat, or speak but by the orders of his minister. This was carried on a little too far and a little too long. It is not safe to bully a lion's whelp. You cannot foresee the moment when he will find out he is a lion."

"And he has done so now!" said M. Maret.

"With a vengeance; he has roared to some effect, too."

"I am delighted to hear it," cried Madame d'Orgeville. "You must forgive me, my dear ambassador, but I could never get over the pastry-cook's elevation; the cakes stuck in my throat."

Kourakin shrugged his shoulders and took snuff. "I might say the same if the poor man was not now in disgrace. One does not like to speak ill of the fallen."

"Then, why did he not say so when the poor man was on his legs?" whispered M. Maret to Madame d'Auban, who did not hear him, and was breathlessly watching for Kourakin's next words, and trembling lest the subject should drop. But everybody wished to hear the details of the minister's fall, and he said, "You remember Dolgorouki? He was here with the Czar Peter some years ago. His son and the little Princess Elizabeth were the czar's only playfellows. Young Dolgorouki always slept in his room, and took every occasion to excite his

young sovereign's resentment against Mentzchikoff. On the 5th of last month he was staying with him at Peterhoff. There he received orders from his father to persuade the czar to jump out of the window in the night, and make his way to a spot where an escort was to be in readiness to conduct him to St. Petersburg; every thing was prepared in the city for an outbreak against the minister. The young monarch was nothing loth, and reached the capital in safety. Once there the imperial guard, the army, and the people, excited by the Dolgoroukis, gathered round the prince, with loud cries of 'Long live the Czar!' 'Long live Peter the Second!' 'Down with Mentzchikoff!' and by the time the minister heard of the plot, his cause was hopeless, and his banishment decreed. By this time he must be moralizing at Yakouska, unless he has died on the way of grief and spite. It is supposed the czar will marry the sister of young Dolgorouki."

"This is a most interesting episode," observed one lady. "And I know nothing to be compared to it in suddenness, since poor M. Fouquet's disgrace."

"M. de Fréjus narrowly escaped a similar fate," said M. Maret.

"Ah! the wily churchman," cried Kourakin, "took quite a different line with his royal pupil than . . ."

"The pastry-cook with his," interrupted Madame d'Orgeville; "and it has certainly answered better."

"For my part," said the Russian ambassador, a little nettled, "I like better to see a young monarch dismiss an arrogant minister, than cry over the loss of a favourite tutor like a child after its nurse."

A few more remarks were made, and then the conversation turned to other topics. When M. d'Auban, his wife, and his little girl returned home that night, they all looked ill and tired,

Madame d'Auban could not sleep that night, or if she closed her eyes a moment, her dreams were agitating. Waking and sleeping she kept revisiting the land where her son was reigning, and picturing to herself what had recently taken place in those scenes she knew so well: at Peterhoff, the imperial boy leaping out of the window in the darkness of the night; in St. Petersburg, the people hailing him like a rescued captive. She felt proud of the energy he had shown. She was glad he had escaped from an unworthy thralldom, but how would he use his liberty, and how wield the fatal sceptre of irresponsible power? Haunted by visions of tortured criminals, of barbarous executions and degrading buffooneries, she shuddered at the thought of her son in the midst of such a court, and growing familiar with vice and cruelty, till her mother's heart could scarcely endure the anguish. She rose from her sleepless bed to pray that she might soon force her way to his side, and speak to him, if it was only once, of justice and of mercy, of God and of eternity. During those hours of the night when one idea engrosses the mind with all-absorbing power, it seemed to her as if she must set out for Russia the very next day. Wild projects of revealing her existence to the King of France or Prince Kourakin flitted through her brain, but they vanished with the morning light. She had already ascertained that the Countess de Konigsmark had died a short time ago, after a lingering illness of nearly two years, which latter circumstance accounted for her silence since the death of the Czar Peter. Of the two other persons who had been concerned in the plot for her escape, she had no means of hearing. Their obscure situation made it more difficult to ascertain what had become of them. But her anxiety on this point was superseded, and all idea

of leaving Paris put an end to for a time, by her husband's increasing illness.

For many succeeding weeks she had but one thought and one care. Dr. Lenoir was called in. He proved to be a relative of Madame d'Auban's fellow-captive in Louisiana, and had heard of her kindness to the poor foolish creature, as he disrespectfully called his brother's widow. Colonel d'Auban's case, he said, required profound repose of body and mind. His strength was to be sustained by every possible means, and every thing agitating or painful as far as possible kept from him. Under favourable circumstances he would venture to predict a complete recovery, otherwise he would not be answerable for his life. This was the opinion he privately gave to Madame d'Auban. The treatment would probably last about four months—good air and a cheerful situation, within reach of his own daily visits, he deemed indispensable.

When he had left the room, Madame d'Auban collected her thoughts and made her calculations. There would not be, at present, any question of their going into society; and this she was glad of, except for one reason—she might lose the chance of hearing news from Russia; but still she hoped, that this loss might be supplied by the visits at home of a few intimate friends. Mina should continue to go to the Hôtel d'Orgeville, in order to acquire, in the society of the young people she met there, the manners of her own country. The next thing to be considered was the removal to another house; and now came the question of *means*. This was the first time in her life that she had had to face that vulgar difficulty. Her own and her husband's money had been embarked in their concessions. The forced sale of their property had been disadvantageous; and the capital they remained possessed of supplied a

very limited income. On the other hand, airy and comfortable apartments in Paris were expensive, and so would be Dr. Lenoir's attendance.

For the first time, Madame d'Auban felt to care for riches. For the first time she became acquainted with the sting of poverty. She looked at her husband, remembered the physician's words, and mentally resolved that, with God's blessing, no care, no anxiety, should impede his recovery—that she alone would bear the burden of solicitude. In a playful manner, with gentleness and tact, she told him what the doctor had said, and demanded, in a smiling but urgent manner, the entire control and management of their expenses.

"My dear heart," he said, fondly kissing her hand, "what do you know of business? How can you manage the affairs of a poor gentilhomme?"

"Better, perhaps, than you imagine, M. d'Auban. Nay, for once," she said, with a graceful dignity which became her well, "I will assert a woman's, a princess's, right to have her own way. Leave every thing to me, dearest Henri. I will it as a wife; I claim it, too."

"By your divine right to rule over the heart and will of your husband, I suppose. But, my beloved one, I cannot suffer that dear head, which ought to have worn a crown, to ache over accounts."

She laid her finger on his lips, and, by loving words and caresses, put an end to his remonstrances.

Two days afterwards a cheerful, pretty apartment in the quartier du Louvre was engaged; the invalid's couch placed near a window commanding a view of the Seine, the Isle de Paris, and the old towers of Notre Dame. Books lent by various friends were laid on the table near him; and every morning Mina brought in bright-coloured flowers to make the room look gay. She bought

them at the *Marché aux Fleurs*, as she walked home from an early mass. M. Lenoir came every day; his conversation entertained his patient, whilst his remedies improved his health. Old friends now and then called of an evening—and all who came into that little sanctuary of peace and love were charmed with Madame d'Auban. A good-natured curiosity was felt about her. Every one wondered that so refined and agreeable a person had been met with in a remote colony. Full of intelligence, and of the best sort of cleverness for a woman—that of appreciating the talents and wit of others—she knew how to promote conversation, without joining very much in it herself. Her very speaking eyes answered, questioned, applauded, or remonstrated; and gave continual evidence of her interest in what others were saying. People were often astonished to find that a person who spoke so little could be such a pleasant member of society. They little knew how hard it was at times to keep the appearance of cheerfulness—how anxiously she was listening for any word which might refer to Russia! seldom daring to ask a direct question, and never looking into a newspaper without a beating heart.

She would sometimes mention her son to her husband, in a casual manner and without any appearance of emotion, that he might not think she was pining for the moment when he could accompany her to St. Petersburg—a scheme long cherished—and which she was more bent upon than ever, since she had heard of the young monarch's emancipation. It seemed to her as if she now might find means of approaching him—of telling him, and no one else, the secret of her life—of whispering words of counsel and warning, even as if a departed mother had risen from her grave to haunt him with her love. Dreams they were, wild hopeless dreams,

perhaps, but to her they did not seem so. And the while she had made the sacrifice of the only means she had of performing this journey. The only valuable possession she had retained was the locket, with the czar's picture set in diamonds; those diamonds she had always intended to sell for this purpose, but she had parted with them now. The sum thus obtained had been partly employed in meeting the expenses of her husband's illness, and the rest she retained for any future emergency of the same kind. When he had asked her how she was able to manage so well with such limited resources, she had answered that she had disposed of trifles she had no use for. It never occurred to him that she had parted with those diamonds.

Now and then news accidentally

reached her of the land where her son reigned. Since the death of the Countess of Konigsmark she had no chance of direct information; but some one said one day that the Empress Eudoxia had been recalled to court by her grand son; and another time she read in the "Mercure de France" that the Princess Mentzchikoff had died of a broken heart, on her way to Siberia; she sighed, for this poor woman had been kind to her once. And when she heard of her son's approaching nuptials with the Princess Dolgorouki, she breathed a fervent prayer that his marriage might be more blest than hers with his father. And the days went by, apparently like one another, though so full to her of hope, fear, and agitations, and at last there came one which had a great influence over her future fate.



CHAPTER V.

Qui survient ? Dame belle et fière
Son carrosse au galop conduit,
Jette à l'autre un flot de poussière
Et l'accrochant fait rire et fuit.

Béranger.

For I saw her, as I thought, dead,
And have in vain said
Many a prayer upon her grave.

Shakespeare.

SOME months after their change of abode, in the afternoon of a day warm as early spring days are wont to be in Paris, Madame d'Auban was walking with her daughter in the Tuilleries gardens. The horse-chestnut trees of the central alley were putting forth their tender leaves, and the orange trees were lining the terrace which overlooks the Seine. The sun was shining full on

the windows of the palace, the whole façade was blazing with light. What tragedies have been enacted since that time in the ancient fortress of the French kings, in sight of the green bowers—the fountains and flowers of those beautiful gardens! What lives and what deaths, what crimes and what sorrows, have stamped bitter memories on their matchless loveliness! And still through every

change of time and of doom, the horse-chestnuts put out their spiral blossoms and drop their shining fruit; and lovers whisper, and children play, and politicians talk, and men laugh and scheme in their shade, whether over the time-honoured dome of the old palace floats the spotless fleur-de-lis or the glorious tri-color.

Many a graceful picture of Boché or Vanloo might give an idea of the aspect of the Tuileries gardens on the day we are speaking of. Groups of fashionable loungers were sauntering up and down; the effect produced by their variegated dresses, their painted fans, their coloured parasols, and the gorgeous liveries of their servants, somewhat resembled that of the beds in the parterre, where tulips and sequinets, anemones, crocuses and jonquils, were displaying their various hues in bright confusion. The reader of the foregoing pages may, perhaps, also picture to himself the mother and child, who hastily withdrawing themselves from the more fashionable part of the garden, seated themselves on a bench in the recess formed by the walls of the orangery. There was certainly something very different in their appearance from that of other people. They were not dressed in the height of the fashion. In dress and in manner there was a distinguished simplicity, a careless but graceful negligence of effect, which would have attracted the attention of a careful observer, but passed unobserved in a crowd. Madame d'Auban's pale blue eyes were as soft and lovely as ever, and her features were still very beautiful; but during the last few months she had grown to look much older, a few gray hairs began to show themselves in her golden tresses. But as to Mina, Wilhelmina as she was now oftener called, there was no doubt as to her beauty. Nobody could have seen and not been struck by it. If she had

stood in the midst of the fine ladies of the central alley, and challenged their notice, they might, indeed, have lifted up their eyebrows with a supercilious stare, and fluttering their fans declared, with affected indifference, that the little creole was tolerable enough; but in their secret hearts each would have hoped that the eyes she herself wished to attract might never rest on the face of this young stranger. Though Mina was only in her thirteenth year, she looked fifteen or sixteen; and her beauty was that of early girlhood rather than of childhood. The mind which spoke in her countenance was matured, also, beyond her age. The life she had led in her earlier years had strengthened and developed her frame, and the climate of Louisiana had prematurely hastened her growth. She was not as strong now as in her native Illinois; her complexion was more delicate, and there was a darker shade under her eyes than that of the black eyelashes which fringed them. But many of the ladies of the court would have given the most costly pearl in their necklace, or the brightest stone in their coronals, for her dark blue and most expressive eyes—for her swanlike neck, or her features, chiselled like the fairest gem of Grecian art.

"I think papa is getting a great deal better now, dearest mother," Mina said, as she unfolded a piece of embroidery, on which her slender fingers were soon busily employed.

"He is, indeed, much better. M. Lenoir's treatment has perfectly succeeded, and now he is of opinion that change of air will greatly contribute to his complete recovery."

"Oh, how delightful! Then we shall leave Paris. Where shall we go?"

"My dear child, we do not mean to take you with us. Madame d'Orgeville has kindly invited you to spend the

time of our absence with her daughters."

Mina frowned, and, hiding her face in her hands, did not answer.

"You have many things to learn, my child, and you may never have such an opportunity again. I would not willingly cut short the time of your residence in Paris. The lessons you are taking now, from first-rate masters, are of the greatest advantage."

Mina sighed. "Could I not go to school in some convent?"

"Do you dislike Mesdemoiselles d'Orgeville?"

"I like Julie pretty well, and Oriane very much; but I cannot—indeed, mamma, I cannot—feel happy with them, as I used to do with Thérèse, Rose, and Agnes."

There was a slight tone of irritation in Madame d'Auban's manner as she answered, "That part of your life is past, Mina; it is of no use to be always dwelling upon it, and nursing vain regrets. You are French, and it is not your destiny, my child, to live with Indians."

"I cannot *feel* French, mother! I cannot think or speak as they do. The girls here do not understand me. They do not care for the sky, or the trees, or the sunset clouds. Ontara and I used to talk of what the rivers whisper as they run by, and of the voices in the pine-trees. We knew what every flower said. I showed him one day a passion flower, and I told him that it was the flower of the Christians' prayer; that the cross and the crown of thorns, the spear and the nails, were in its bosom, and that that was why I loved it so much; and he pointed to a sun-flower, and said, 'This is the flower of the Natches' prayer. It worships the sun, as we do. Every day it turns to him as he sets the same look which it turned to him when he rose.'

"But, my Mina, Ontara is a heathen.

How could you have felt so much sympathy with one who does not believe in Jesus Christ?"

Mina mused for a moment. She was putting to herself the same question. "Mother, Ontara will be a Christian one day. He promised me never to part with his crucifix, and to say every day a prayer I taught him. Mother, Ontara will love our Lord one day; he loves the Great Spirit now much more than many of the French Christians do."

"Do not say 'the Great Spirit,' Mina. You must leave off talking like the Indians."

"I will say 'the Good God,' said Mina, gently. "But, mother, some of the people here speak of the Supreme Being. Are they heathens?"

"Not much better than heathens, I am afraid," said Madame d'Auban with a sigh. She looked anxiously at her daughter. A fear was perhaps crossing her mind lest her sweet wild-flower should lose its fragrance in the hothouse of a Parisian schoolroom.

"Where are you and my father going?" asked Mina, after a pause.

"To Brittany; he wishes to see his native place again before leaving France, perhaps for ever."

Madame d'Auban did not add that this was to be but the first step of a long journey, the accomplishment of which was her long-cherished hope.

"Mother, where is *your* native place?" This was timidly said; Mina was conscious that there was something mysterious in her mother's fate. Many little circumstances had led her to suspect it besides the prayers they daily said in secret for her unknown brother. She had never ventured before to put a direct question to her on the subject. There was a troubled look in her mother's face as she answered—

"Your fate and mine, my daughter,

may be similar, I think, in one respect. Neither of us will probably ever visit again the place of our birth: but you may speak of yours; I can never mention mine."

Mina seized her mother's hand. "I am so sorry!" she said, tenderly kissing it. "It is so sad never to speak of what we love!"

A sudden thought seemed to occur to Madame d'Auban. "Mina," she said, "if in after years, perhaps when I am dead, it should ever come into your mind that, where so much concealment was necessary, there may have been guilt, remember what I now say to you. Never dream for a moment, my child, that there was aught to be ashamed of in your mother's life; keep in mind this solemn assurance, given at the eve of our first separation. You cannot understand its full meaning now, but you will hereafter. Your mother's history is an extraordinary one, but no disgrace is attached to it. These words must remain buried in your heart, my daughter. Question me not, nor others, on this subject; we will not revert to it again."

Mina again kissed her mother, and then said, "Is there the least chance, mamma, that the appointment papa hopes to obtain will be in the New France?"

"Not the least chance of it—banish all such hope from your mind, Mina. If a post was offered him on the continent of America, he would decline it. He does not wish, and I would not for the world that he returned to a country where he has suffered so much. The effects of that terrible time are only now disappearing. I always observed at New Orleans that the sight of an Indian made him shudder."

The blood rushed to Mina's cheeks and suffused her temples; her heart beat with violence. "And yet Ontara saved his life and mine, and Pearl Feath-

er died for us!" she passionately exclaimed; and, rushing forward a little way beyond the bench, she stood still, battling down the vehement feelings her mother's words had awakened. In a few instants she returned, and, throwing her arms round her mother's neck, whispered, "Dearest, dearest papa, I know how much he suffered, and he is so good; but, oh, mother, some of my Indian brothers are good too!"

Just as the young girl was giving way to this burst of feeling, the quiet corner where her mother and herself were sitting was invaded by a number of smartly-dressed persons, who formed themselves in a group just opposite to them. They were discussing with great eagerness something that was going on or about to take place, and which evidently excited interest and amusement. In the centre of this assemblage stood a lady of unusual height, whose features were strikingly handsome. She was dressed in the extreme of fashion; spoke in a loud, ringing, but not unharmonious voice, and seemed to command the attention and admiration of the bystanders. The expression of her countenance varied every moment; sometimes wild merriment gleamed in her black eyes, and arch, mischievous smiles played on her lips, or a look of defiant resolution compressed them tightly together. At moments, a sweet and almost melancholy shade of thought overcast that sparkling brilliancy; she talked a great deal, and gesticulated incessantly.

"Does the great trial of strength really come off to-day?" asked one of the gentlemen who crowded round her. "You have made a bold challenge, Mademoiselle, and I fear your backers will have to pay the costs."

"Bah!" she said, laughing. "Even defeat in this case will be honourable. And so much the worse for those who have been rash enough to stake their

fortunes on the strength of my wrist! A slender one, gentlemen," she added, showing a well-shaped and very white hand.

"Does your antagonist furnish the plate?"

"Of course he does."

"My dear," said one of the ladies, "I am afraid you will be conquered. I know you bend five-franc pieces like wafers, but a silver plate! You have never yet attempted that."

"I could not afford it." There was a general burst of laughter.

"Mademoiselle grown economical! Wonders will never cease!"

"Perhaps not," said the lady, and the thoughtful, mournful look came into her face, but in a second she was laughing again at her own thoughts, apparently. "I could amuse you all very much," she said, "by relating my adventures since we last met here."

"It has been reported that you had left Paris, but nobody could tell where you were gone," said one of the gentlemen.

"I dare say not. Well, I went to the dull little capital of a foolish little kingdom. Guess now where I went."

"I should never have guessed," said another gentleman, "that Mademoiselle Gaultier would have sought dullness under any form. There is no affinity between her and dullness."

"I did not find Stutgard at all dull. On the contrary, the twenty-four hours I spent there were exceedingly lively."

"And what in the name of patience took you there, my dear?" asked the same lady who had spoken before.

"Well, if you wish to hear the story, here it is. His Royal Highness of Wurtemberg and I were great friends all last winter. He is, as you know, a patron of the stage—writes plays himself—bad ones—but that is neither here nor there. He had often invited me to visit his duchy; so last week, as the weather

was fine, and Paris not *amusingly* amusing, I took it into my head to go. I travelled day and night, with only one servant. Oh, dear, what beautiful nights they were! I wonder if you Parisians have ever thought of looking at the stars? I assure you it is very worth while. At the end of four days I arrived at the König's Hof, and wrote to my royal friend to announce my arrival. He had the condescension to call upon me on the same day, and was all bows and smiles and compliments; but when I spoke of paying him my respects at the palace on the morrow, I noticed a visible embarrassment on the Grand-ducal countenance. He said there was no occasion to fatigue myself so soon after my journey—ah! ah! do I look like a person easily fatigued?—and that he would send his chamberlain the next day to inquire after my health. And the chamberlain came, and, what was more extraordinary, the chamberlain told the truth! It appeared that his Royal Highness, good soul, had betrayed imprudent marks of satisfaction on hearing of my arrival, and had given orders that I should be forthwith invited to dine at the palace. But it was not to be. The noble and high and mighty and virtuous Countess d'Ernstthumer, a Wurtembergian—Madame de Maintenon—a left-handed, morganatic sort of divinity, presiding over the decorum and morality of the pompous little court, had decreed otherwise. She raised a tremendous outcry, and protested against such an honour being paid to Mademoiselle Gaultier, première actrice du Théâtre Français. And the veto took effect."

"Too bad!" "Too insolent!" "Intolerable!" "Impertinent!" exclaimed the listeners, in different keys.

"What did you say to that wretched chamberlain?"

"I asked if the excellent countess enjoyed good health."

"Good heavens! my dear," exclaimed one of the ladies, "you were not going to poison her?"

"No; I am too much afraid of hell; and besides, it would not have been half such fun as what I did do."

"And what on earth was that?" cried the audience.

"Well, I took a drive the next day."

"Is that all?"

"I drove myself, of course, as I do here. Mine host of the König's Hof, whose good graces I had won by florins and civil speeches, lent me a charming pair of unbroken horses, which I ordered to be harnessed to a light phaeton. It had rained all night, and the ground was delightfully soft and muddy. My friend the chamberlain had kindly informed me at what hour I might have the pleasure of seeing all the beau monde of Stutgard parading up and down the promenade. Was not that a treat for a stranger from Paris? The Countess d'Ernstthumer, he said, always took a drive between one and two in her open carriage and four. I managed my wild steeds to perfection; we raced up and down the alleys, scattering mud in every direction. I kept them pretty well in hand till we came in sight of the morganatic equipage. 'Tis not to be described how frantic they then became—how they reared and plunged, and ended by running against its left wheel and sending it right over on its side—gently enough, too! The good German horses stood stock-still, and the ladies fell one upon another in the mud, like so many pillows in silk and muslin cases."

"Well done!" "Well done!" "Bravo, Madlle. Gaultier!" re-echoed in the circle.

"Ay, but mind you, nobody cried 'bravo' on the promenade at Stutgard (and the Germans can work themselves up into a fury if you give them time); so there was no time to lose, and

I drove like the wind to my König's Hof, where a post-chaise and four was waiting for me. We flew rather than galloped to the frontier. The postboys had never before been promised so much Trinkgeld. Once on the French side of the river, I stood up in the carriage, shook my glove in defiance, and then flung it into the Rhine. In four more days and nights I travelled back to Paris, the only place fit for human beings to live in."

"What did the Grand Duke think?" somebody said.

"Oh! I had a letter this morning describing the storm in a puddle which ensued. I was to have been thrown into prison. Ah! ah! The journey back was delightful. We had all sorts of adventures, and ran a thousand risks, Constant and I. We were nearly murdered in a cut-throat-looking inn."

"Have you never known what it is to be frightened, Mademoiselle Gaultier?" a lady asked.

"I beg your pardon, Madame, I am terribly afraid of the least pain; the prick of a needle makes me faint, and a hard bed cry. Mais que voulez-vous?—excitement is every thing."

Just then there was a stir amongst the bystanders. A man of high stature and noble appearance had joined the assemblage, and was standing opposite Mademoiselle Gaultier, with his back to Madame d'Auban and her daughter.

"Ah, Monsieur le Comte!" the actress gaily exclaimed, "I was beginning to think you had forgotten my challenge."

The person she thus addressed answered, with a smile: "You are not content with one defeat, fair lady; you must needs seek another. So be it then. On the last occasion when we tried the strength of our wrists, you forfeited to me the rose which Zaïre had worn on the preceding evening. I am grown more ambitious now, and

if I win I shall ask for the fellow of the glove which the free German Rhine is carrying to the sea."

"Ah! you have heard of my adventures, Monsieur le Comte? Are you not afraid of measuring your strength with so malignant an enemy?"

"Very much afraid," answered the stranger, with a smile. "But faint heart never won or vanquished fair lady; so I must needs keep up my courage by all the inducements in my power. Here are two silver plates: bent or unbent, they remain yours after the trial; and if I win, then I claim the champion's glove."

"Very well," said Mademoiselle Gaultier. "Give me a plate."

It was handed to her. She took it up with a half-confident, half-doubtful look, colouring with eagerness, and smiling as if anticipating a triumph. Then laying it down again, she began by bending with her fingers, slender and thin, but as strong as steel, a five-franc piece, which she rolled as if it had been a wafer. Everybody applauded.

"Now for the great attempt!" she said; and the eyes of all present were fixed upon her as she again took up the silver plate.

Madame d'Auban and Mina were watching her like the rest. There was something irresistibly attractive in the good-humoured wilfulness of her handsome face.

"Nobody has ever conquered me," she said, overlooking, with feminine inconsistency, her recent defeat.

When a woman wills something, and that something is a triumph of some kind, how resolved she is upon it! The colour deepened visibly under the rouge on her cheeks. She bent the whole strength of her fingers, of her arm, of her whole frame on the plate, which would not yield to that desperate pressure. Her lips were firmly and

tightly compressed; the veins in her forehead swelled. She turned pale with the prolonged effort. "Allons! I am beat," she cried, vexed and yet laughing. "I don't believe you can bend it, Monsieur le Comte."

The stranger bowed, took it up, and with a scarcely perceptible effort rolled it up like a piece of parchment.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the lady, with frank good humour, and pulling off her glove she presented it to her antagonist with a graceful curtsy. "To have entered the lists with such an adversary is in itself an honour, and to be defeated by him more glorious than to conquer a meaner foe. And yet," she added, laughing, "it is pitiful not to be able any more to boast that what anybody else has done one can also do."

Her cortège accompanied her as she moved away, and no one remained in that part of the garden but Madame d'Auban and Mina and Madlle. Gaultier's antagonist, who suddenly turned round and sat down at the farthest end of the bench where they were seated. He took out a parcel of letters from his pocket and began to read them, without paying any attention to his neighbours. Mina had been much amused with the scene she had witnessed.

"Is not that gentleman wonderfully strong, mamma?" she said in French.

"Speak German," whispered her mother, glancing at the stranger.

"The lady is also very strong," Mina said in that language, "and she is very handsome too. Do you think she looks good, mamma?"

The gentleman at the end of the bench evidently understood German, for he turned round, amused at Mina's question, and looked at her with curiosity first and then with unmistakable admiration. But he soon resumed his reading.

"I think her manners are too bold.

but there is something prepossessing in her countenance," was Madame d'Auban's answer to her daughter's remark.

"Yes, mamma; I see what you mean about her being too bold, but I am glad you like her face. I do."

"She is an actress—not a person in society."

"An actress! I wonder if she acts as well as Pouponne?"

"Who is Pouponne, my dear?"

"Madame de Simiane's grand-daughter, mamma. She came the other day to see Julie and Oriane, and she told us that at her school they were going to act *Athalie*, and that she was going to be the Queen. M. d'Héricourt had been teaching her when to stand and to sit down, and to put out her hand, and to look up to heaven. She repeated to us her part; you can't think how well she did it, mamma; especially that bit when *Athalie* says:—

"*Où serais-je aujourd'hui si domptant ma faiblesse
Je n'eusse d'une mère étouffé la tendresse?*"

"Hush, darling!" said her mother, and an expression of pain passed over her face.

Mina perceived it, and, hastening to change the subject, exclaimed, "I wish I was a queen! Not a make-believe one, but a queen in good earnest."

"What can make you wish for such a fate, Mina?"

"I would then fit out an immense ship and return to America, and on the top of the hill where Eagle-eye used to carry me I would build a cathedral as large as *Nôtre Dame*, which would be the wonder of the New World."

"Do you fancy that kings and queens are free agents, my child; or, that they are happier than other people?"

"Everybody says—happy as a king or a queen. Julie says, she should be as happy as a queen if she married somebody about the Court, and was invited to Marly."

"Those who use that form of speech

have never known what anguish often wrings the hearts of those they foolishly envy."

Mina laid her head in a caressing manner against her mother's shoulder, and looking up into her face said, "But how do you know what they suffer, sweetest mother? You have never lived in a palace."

Madame d'Auban pushed back the curls from her daughter's forehead, and, pressing her lips upon it, murmured, "Take my word for it, Mina, there is sometimes no slavery more galling than that of royalty, and no more melancholy prison than a palace. The hardest of all chains are often invisible; and many a heart breaks in silence on or near a throne."

These last words, uttered with some emotion, and in a rather louder voice than that in which Madame d'Auban had hitherto spoken, caused the stranger, who had now finished reading his letters, to bend forward and endeavour to catch a glimpse of her face; but, not succeeding, he collected his papers and walked away. As he passed before Madame d'Auban he looked hard at her, and in a few minutes turned back again and fixed his eyes earnestly upon her. She remarked it, and for the first time she also caught sight of his features, and felt at once that they were not unknown to her.

"Put up your work, darling," she hurriedly said. "It is time to go."

"Oh, do let us stay a little longer, dearest mamma! It is so pleasant now under the trees."

"No, no; make haste, Mina."

For the third time the stranger turned back, and this time he stopped opposite to them. Madame d'Auban's eyes met his eager glance, and every trace of colour vanished from her cheek. She remained motionless and cold as any of the stone statues about her. The stranger pronounced a single word,

"Madame!" There was wonder, respect, and a tacit inquiry in the tone with which it was uttered. In the ears of her to whom it was addressed, it sounded like a voice from another world; for that stranger and herself had been friends in early youth—almost like a brother had that man been to her; and at sight of him thoughts of her family, and home, and old associations were rushing upon her with indescribable might.

"The Comte de Saxe," she murmured. The name died away on her lips, but she could not repress the choking and blinding tears which would flow in spite of all her efforts.

"Dear companion of my childhood," the Count began, in a low and rapid tone—"friend of my earlier days, do my senses beguile me, or do I, indeed, behold you again? Oh, madame, what does this mean? What miracle has raised you from an untimely grave? For God's sake, explain to me this mystery!"

Madame d'Auban made a strong effort to rise, and leaning on Mina she turned away. "It is a mistake," she faintly said, and tried to walk on. But the Count seized her hand and exclaimed—

"It is your voice, as well as your face! It is yourself! You cannot deceive me!"

"Let go my mother's hand," cried Mina, with the air of a young chieftainess. "You make her weep. Begone!"

Without heeding her, the Count continued—"Good God! madame! cannot you trust me? Have you the heart to treat me as a stranger?"

She had struggled for composure, and partly regained it. A thousand rapid thoughts and fears had passed through her mind. In those days of irresponsible power in sovereigns, and with the strong abhorrence of mesalliances in royal families, there was more ground

for her apprehensions than can be easily conceived in the present day. In a steadier tone she said—"This is some singular misapprehension, sir. I have been ill, and was overcome by the suddenness of your strange address. Some accidental resemblance, I suppose—"

"Resemblance!" cried the Count, impatiently. "But be it so, madame, if such is your will. My respect is as unbounded as my attachment is profound. Far be it from me to intrude upon you. Your simplest wish is as much a law to me now as when at your father's—"

"Hush! for God's sake hush!" The words burst from Madame d'Auban's lips, as she glanced at Mina, and, before she had time to recall them, she felt that she had tacitly acknowledged what she meant to hide. A crimson hue overspread her face.

"Your daughter?" said the Count de Saxe, glancing admiringly at Mina, who was frowning at the audacious stranger. "And her name is—?"

"Wilhelmina d'Auban," cried the young girl; "and I wish some of my brave Indians were here to drive you away."

"Ah! madame, we have both mourned," said the Count—"both wept over the loss of another Wilhelmina."

Madame d'Auban burst into tears.

"Do sit down again," cried the Count de Saxe; and she did so, for her limbs were trembling, so that she could hardly stand. He stood for a moment gazing upon her with an expression in which anxiety, curiosity, and sympathy were all combined. Mina looked from one to the other with a perplexed and anxious countenance. At last, in a tone of deep feeling, he said—"I know not whether to go or to stay. I scarcely know how to address you, madame. Would to God you would speak to me one word only! Tell me, I am not mad!"

Madame d'Auban raised her tearful eyes, and looked at him with that peculiar expression which had made the Princess Charlotte of Wolfenbittel the object of his boyish worship, and she answered in a tremulous voice, "She whom you think you see is indeed dead—dead to kindred, to friends, to that world in which she once lived. Do not disturb the peace of her grave. Forget the stranger you have met to-day."

"Could I ever think of *you* as a stranger?"

"Think of me as you please! But, oh, M. de Saxe, be kind, be generous, and do not by a fatal curiosity ruin happiness which hangs on a thread!"

"You are happy, then?"

Madame d'Auban glanced at her daughter, and bowed her head in assent.

"Heaven forbid I should cause you a moment's uneasiness! I will, of course, forbear from any inquiries that may pain you or endanger your peace; but may I not come and see you? Will you not give me the explanation of what an hour hence will seem to me an incredible dream?"

"M. de Saxe, if you will give me your word of honour that you will be silent as the grave, ay, as the grave it-

self, as to this meeting, I will write in three months' time, and explain to you this mystery. I may then have a favour to ask of you."

"I promise—I swear," eagerly cried the Comte de Saxe; "but if at the end of three months I do not hear from you, I shall think it my duty to inform the King, my master, of your existence."

"In three months? So be it. But if I live, you will hear from me before that time. You promise that you will not follow me now, or seek to discover my abode?"

"I promise," answered the Count. "But if during that interval you should need the aid of a strong arm and a devoted heart, think, madame, of Maurice of Saxony. I suppose I must not ask for one word of kind farewell?"

Madame d'Auban held out her hand, which he kissed with profound respect. "Farewell, and Heaven bless you, Maurice," she said in a trembling voice.

When the mother and daughter had disappeared, the Comte de Saxe stood some time in the same place, musing on this extraordinary meeting with one whom for years he had thought of as dead. "If I am not more mad than any madman in Bicêtre," he inwardly exclaimed, "truth is stranger than the wildest fiction."

CHAPTER VI.

If I could see him it were well with me.

Coleridge's Wallenstein.

There came an eve of festal hours—
Rich music filled that garden's bowers;
Lamps that from flowering branches hung,
On sparks of dew soft colour flung;
And bright forms glanced—a fairy show
Under the blossoms to and fro.

But one, a lone one, 'midst the throng
Seemed reckless all of dance and song;
He was a youth of dusky mien,
Whereon the Indian sun had been,
Of crested brow and long black hair,
A stranger, like the palm-tree, there.

Mrs. Hemans.

But though this mayden tender were of age,
Yet in the brest of her virginite
Ther was enclosed rype and sad corrage.

Chaucer.

A FEW days after the occurrence related in the last chapter, Madame d'Auban and her husband left Paris for Brittany. Hopes had been held out to him of an appointment in the Isle de Bourbon, but some weeks were to elapse before he could receive a decisive answer. In the mean time he wished to sell a small property he had in Brittany, and proposed to employ the fund it would fetch in carrying out his wife's project of a journey to St. Petersburg. He knew it to be a wild, possibly a dangerous, scheme, and deemed it very improbable that the results would be satisfactory to her maternal feelings; but he had promised when he married her not to put any obstacles in the way of her seeking to see her son; and on the eve of what would, most likely, be a final departure from Europe, he felt it right to allow her the chance of looking once more on her boy's face, even though she might not gain admittance to the young sovereign's presence in any of

the thousand ways she was always devising. Her meeting with the Comte de Saxe had proved that she was not so much altered in appearance as she fancied, but it would be easy in St. Petersburg to put on such a disguise as would effectually prevent any chance of recognition; and on some public occasion, at all events, she might feast her eyes on the features memory so faintly retraced and imagination so often pictured.

It was on a beautiful morning in May, that after leaving Mina, not without many anxious thoughts, at the Hotel d'Orgeville, they drove away from Paris in a diligence, along one of those old-fashioned chaussées, bordered on both sides by elms, and fields intersected with rows of apple trees. White fleecy clouds were careering over the calm bright sky, and the conducteur whistled the tune of the "Bon roi Dagobert," as, amidst clouds of dust, they rolled on towards the northern coast. On the evening of the third

day they reached Colonel d'Auban's native place. Once again he looked on the well-known coast, its rocky islets and overhanging cliffs. He heard the osprey's cry, the sound of the waves receding on the stony beach of Keir Anna, and the bells of the little chapel built by the sailors in honour of Mary, Star of the Sea. The scent of the clover fields, mixing with the briny smell of the ocean, came floating on the breeze. It seemed to breathe new life into his frame; under the roof of the little Breton inn for the first time for nearly three years he slept without dreaming of Red Indians and murdered women. The few days they spent in this obscure village seemed to do him all and even more than the good which the doctor had anticipated from a change of scene and air. His wife sat by his side on the sea shore, or wandered with him through the fragrant lanes around the old manor house where he was born. Spring was in its full beauty, and as they inhaled the fresh sea breezes, and trod on the soft herbage of the perfumed down, a repose stole over his mind and a strength returned to his limbs, such as he had never hoped again to feel. For both of them it was a blessed breathing-time. They felt it to be so, and turned back with many a wistful look towards the little village on the shore, whilst they slowly ascended, in advance of the diligence, the first hill on the road to Havre, beyond which they were to lose sight of it.

Havre, with its crowded streets, its noisy quays, and the forests of masts in its busy port, formed a striking contrast to the peaceful spot they had just left. On their way to the hotel which they had written to for lodgings, they stopped at an office to inquire about the vessel in which they intended to sail for St. Petersburg. It was expected to heave anchor in two days;

and d'Auban said he would return on the following morning to make final arrangements about their berths. At the hotel they hoped to find letters from Paris, and were not disappointed; on the table of the little parlour they were shown into, two or three were lying.

"Oh, there is one from our Mina," cried Madame d'Auban, her eyes sparkling with delight. She sat down and opened it."

"Read to me what that darling writes," he said, with a bright smile; and seating himself opposite to her, he leant his head on his hands and listened.

This was Mina's letter :—

"Dearest Mamma and dearest Papa,— I am so happy! When you went away, I thought I should not have a moment's happiness during your absence, but a great joy has come to me since, which has been like a burst of sunshine in a dark sky, for I was very lonely, and felt very miserable in this great Paris without you. My heart is even now very sad at times, but I no longer feel lonely. My brother is come. My dear brother Ontara is in Paris. O mother, I could not close my eyes with joy. I could do nothing all the night after I heard it, but thank God, and long for the next day. I was to see him the next day. I have seen him, and he is as good and as handsome, and loves his sister Mina as much as ever. He wishes to be a Christian, and I am to go every day with Madame Maret to the Bishop's house to translate the instructions he will give him before he is baptized. Nobody but me could make him understand. He speaks only a few words of French. M. Maret said he would write to you all about it. He has bought him from the government. What right has the government to sell men, and to make slaves of princes? But M. Maret will give him his liberty. He told me

so last night. It is the old Sachem's crucifix which brought it all about. Ontara's conversion I mean. We sat together looking at it, and I cried with a joy that was like pain, it went so deeply through my heart. Ontara did not shed tears, because Indians never weep, but he said words strong as the wind and hot as fire about the Christian prayer. And when I was told to ask him what he wished most to see in Paris, he answered: 'The house of God—the home of the Great Spirit.' I have not time to write much more. Madame Maret has sent her carriage to fetch me. Dearest mamma, at the Hotel de Sénac, where I saw my brother Ontara, I met the gentleman who bent the silver plate. He was very kind, and talked to me a long time. Papa told me to write some news, but I don't think I know any. I have told you the good news which makes me so happy. Every thing else seems stupid. I heard somebody say last night that the Princesse des Ursins is very ill, and that the young Czar of Russia" . . . the letter fell from the mother's hand—her husband seized it . . . "that the young Czar of Russia has just died of the small-pox. Give a hundred kisses to dearest papa. Oh that I could hold you both in my arms. Do come back soon to your own Mina. I am very happy with my dear brother, but can never be quite happy whilst you are both away from me.—Your loving and dutiful daughter,

"WILHELMINA D'AUBAN."

This was a terrible letter for a mother to receive! The blow was a sudden one, and the manner of it horribly painful. The affection her daughter expressed for the stranger she called her brother, the joyful tone in which she wrote, filled her heart with a feeling which was almost like resentment. "O! that you had let me tell her," she cried.

"It is too dreadful that his sister . . ." Then she hid her face in her hands, and said no more.

It was a very bitter grief. "It may not be true, dearest," said her husband; and he went to enquire at the Russian consulate.

She never doubted that it was true. There had always been in her mind a misgiving that she should not see again the royal child whom she had left in its cradle. Now the intervening years seemed as nothing. The young monarch dying in the flower of his age, rose before her as the baby of those by-gone days. She scarcely noticed d'Auban's return, or the words of pity and sympathy which he addressed to her. For some hours she could not weep or speak, but went into a church and prayed that the hard dull feeling at her heart might melt. At last softer emotions rose, and her tears flowed. It was a kind of sorrow which had its peculiar bitterness, and its peculiar consolations. Now she felt disengaged from the single tie which had bound her to the past. Her son seemed in some ways nearer to her in the invisible world, where her prayers might help him, than on the far-off throne she had not dared to approach. By degrees a peaceful sadness stole over her—a sense of rest. She could discern mercy in the blow which had removed him from a scene of so much strife and temptation.

When she had arrived at Håvre her feelings had been very much excited. Looking at the billowy sea, on which she was soon to embark, it seemed as if all its waves and storms had gone over her.

The fitful lights, the transient gleams, reflected in its bosom from a tempestuous sky and a clouded sunset, pictured the agitation in her breast. Now all was calm as a waveless sea. Death's subduing power had hushed those bil-

lows to rest. Many a doubt was solved by its cold hand, and she who had so eagerly and yet so fearfully looked forward to that strange journey, now prepared to retrace her steps with a sadder but a more tranquil heart.

"How glad you must now be," she said to her husband, "to have yielded to my wild wish. Another day and I should have been on my way to St. Petersburg! How strange it seems! No outward change in my life, and yet so great a one in my hidden existence. Was there ever, I wonder, so extraordinary a fate as mine?"

As she said this, her eye rested on Mina's letter, which had remained on the table, and she exclaimed, "Take it away. I cannot bear the sight of it."

D'Auban was grieved about this letter. Of course, their beloved child was not to blame in writing as she had done, and the outpouring of her feelings of joy was as natural as the feeling itself. But her parents found it difficult to sympathize at that moment with the happiness she expressed at Ontara's arrival in Paris. They were very glad of the young Indian chief's safety, and thankful for his conversion. It would have been easier for them to rejoice at the news, if it had not been coupled with the actual announcement of her unknown brother's death. Both felt how immense was the debt of gratitude they owed to the Natches youth, and that they were on every account bound to welcome him as a son. They did not like to acknowledge, even to themselves, the involuntary feeling of regret that Mina should have met with him again, under circumstances likely to increase and excite to the uttermost her interest and sympathy. They wanted her to be a little more like other girls, without losing any of her goodness or her charm. Perhaps they wanted what was not possible. At all events, the romance and tenderness of her nature,

joined to a simplicity which baffled all attempts to make her see things in a conventional light, made it probable that she would attach herself more than ever to her adopted brother; and would behave to him in Paris with the same innocent and affectionate familiarity which had existed between them in the days of her captivity. The tie which had been formed between them when his protection had been all important, and the faithful way in which he had fulfilled the trust reposed in him, had made the strongest impression on her heart and her imagination. Madame d'Auban knew her daughter's disposition, and the impassioned gratitude she bore to her young deliverer, who had three times acted by her the part of a guardian angel. Not for the world would she have checked that feeling; or been untrue, herself, to those sentiments of gratitude; but she was, nevertheless, anxious. The position was a peculiar one, and Mina might surprise those about her by the exhibition of feelings they would not understand. She longed to reach Paris, and hasten their departure from a country whence she could now carry away with her every thing she had left to care for on earth.

On the evening which Mina had alluded to in her letter to her parents, there had been, as was usual at the Hotel d'Orgeville, visitors in the evening. She was sitting, with the young ladies of the family and their governess, at a table in one part of the room, at some distance from the circle which surrounded the mistress of the house. There was one person who generally managed to seat himself by the side of the little Creole, and to engage her in conversation. This was M. Maret, the brother of Father Maret, whom she had so much loved, and about whom he had always something to ask, and she something to tell. Every detail of

his apostolic life at the Illinois interested him; and he never wearied of hearing her relate the story of the last journey he had made with her parents and herself, and of the way in which he had employed the hours which preceded his tragical death. She had often mentioned to him his visit to the old dying sachem; and how, with his last breath, he had recommended Ontara to her father. And this led them often to talk of Ontara. She told him how good and generous he was; how he had been a friend in the hour of need to her mother and herself; and that he preserved a touching reverence for the black robe who had been kind to his adopted father, the old sachem Outalissi. D'Auban had confirmed all his daughter's statements as to the merits of the young Indian chief; and had begged M. Maret, if any intelligence as to his fate ever reached the Government, to use all his influence in obtaining for him the most favourable treatment. He had spoken to the same effect to the Minister of the Colonies, and never omitted an opportunity of discharging this debt of gratitude.

On the evening already referred to, M. Maret had just returned from a journey to the south of France. As he entered the salon of the Hotel d'Orgeville, there was a look of satisfaction in his countenance, mixed with a little self-complacency. After paying his compliments to Madame d'Orgeville and bowing to the rest of the company, he said, as he seated himself by that lady's side, "I hastened, madam, to pay my respects to you; but my visit must, I fear, be a short one, for I have a guest at home to whose entertainment I must devote myself."

"A personage of distinction, I doubt not?" said Madame d'Orgeville.

"I think," answered M. Maret, glancing round the room and fixing his eyes on Mina, "that I may venture to reply

in the affirmative. My guest is of princely birth."

"A prince!" cried two or three ladies at once. "A French or a foreign prince?"

"A foreigner, mesdames."

"The pretender, perhaps?" suggested one of the gentlemen.

"The King of England, you mean?" cried an elderly lady, who had been about the Court of St. Germain.

"No; I had the honour of meeting that royal individual at the Duc de Lauzun's house some years ago, when he was at Passy. But he is not the person alluded to."

"A foreigner!" ejaculated Madame d'Orgeville. "You must really give us a hint. Is he German or Italian? Catholic or Protestant?"

"Neither, Madame."

"Heavens! Is he a Turk?" cried Mdlle. Bachelier, the governess.

"My young guest, mesdames, is the scion of a royal race; the last remaining descendant of the Children of the Sun."

Mina started up, much to the surprise of her companions, clasped her hands together, and, breathless with surprise and agitation, gasped out the words—"My brother Ontara?"

"Yes; the young prince Ontara," answered the Prince de Condé's secretary, rubbing his hands with delight. "Mesdames, this noble Indian aided the escape of our friend M. le Colonel d'Auban, and was the friend and protector of his wife and daughter during their captivity."

"And he adopted me as his sister," said Mina, her eyes filling with tears. "After the destruction of the Natches and the slaughter of their royal family," M. Maret went on to say, "he and another young man who had also escaped the vengeance of our troops, took refuge amidst a neighbouring tribe, and lived there in concealment.

There was a Christian Mission in that neighbourhood, and he used to visit the black robe." "Oh, I am so glad!" ejaculated Mina, whose head was bent forward and whose eyes seemed to dilate with the intentness of her interest. "Some fanatical Indians accused him of a leaning towards the Frenchmen's prayer, and either on that account or to gain the reward promised by the Government, betrayed him to the French authorities. He and his companion were carried in chains to New Orleans. M. Perrier ordered them to be well treated and sent to France, where the Government would then ultimately decide their fate. They were to be sold as slaves on their arrival, unless any special orders to the contrary had been received. I happened to be at Marseilles when they landed, and offered to purchase Ontara in order to take him away with me at once. This was agreed to under reserve, and thus he became my slave."

A shade, dark as a thunder-cloud, rose on Mina's speaking face. "But I need hardly add only in name, and to enable me to receive into my home as a son the youth to whom my martyred brother's last thought was given."

There was a general murmur of sympathy; and as to Mina, she could not any longer sit still. Darting across the room she seized his hand in both hers, and in the fulness of her heart, exclaimed:

"I love you dearly, M. Maret. May the good God reward you." He made room for her on the couch, and she sat down by his side, hanging down her lovely head, for she felt as if she had been too bold, but not letting go his hand.

"I was immensely struck," he went on to say, "with Ontara's appearance and manners. He is singularly gentle and pleasing, and shows great intelli-

gence, although he knows as yet but a very few words of French. I contrived to make him understand that I was the brother of the black robe of the Illinois who was killed at the Natches. The Indian words I have learnt from you, Mademoiselle Mina, were of great use to me. His face lighted up immediately; and, half by words half by signs, he expressed that he remembered that black robe, and would love me because I was his brother. I then mentioned your name, Mademoiselle Mina, and I wish every lady here could have seen him at that moment. Mesdames, it would have made the fortune of one of our best actors to have caught that expression. It was emotion, but an emotion that rose from the soul into the eyes, if I may so speak, without stirring a muscle of the calm immovable countenance. I felt as if I could hear his heart beat, but his features did not move. He drew a little crucifix from his breast, and pressed it to his lips."

"We both kissed it in the forest where we parted," said the girl, in a low voice. "I knew he would always keep it. What was the other Indian's name, M. Maret?"

"Osseo."

"Oh! I knew him," Mina exclaimed, and shuddered.

"He has escaped," said M. Maret. "The very night they disembarked he got away from the lodging where they were; and when we left Marseilles nothing had been heard of him."

"When shall I see Ontara, dear M. Maret?"

"If Madame d'Orgeville will permit it, I will bring him here to-morrow."

"Permit it!" exclaimed that lady. "I shall be quite delighted to make acquaintance with the young Indian prince. My rooms will scarcely hold all the friends who will wish to be present on the occasion of his first introduction into French society."

"How interesting it will be," said one lady to another, "to witness the meeting between the lovely Creole and her deliverer?"

Mina thought it very long to wait till the next evening, but did not venture to say so. As M. Maret was going away, she asked Madame d'Orgeville if she might take a sprig of jessamine out of a nosegay on the table, and giving it to him, she said:

"Will you tell Ontario that Mina sends him this flower. In the language we used to speak together, it means, 'I love you with all my heart.'"

Mdlle. Bachelier lifted up her eyes, and shrugged her shoulders, as much as to say, "Thank Heaven that girl is no pupil of mine!" or, in familiar English, "Who ever witnessed such behaviour?" and it was probable nobody ever had, in the only world Mdlle. Bachelier was acquainted with, seen anything at all like it.

Mina's simplicity was too perfect to be easily understood. Some of Madame d'Orgeville's visitors, who belonged to the school which influenced through its different phases the tone of French literature, from Rousseau to Bernardin de St. Pierre and Chateaubriand, enchanted with the beauty and *naïveté* of Mina d'Auban, extolled her sensibility, and raised her to the rank of a heroine of romance. The prudent governess, and the sentimental ladies, were both mistaken in the estimate of her character. She was neither bold nor romantic. She had been brought up under peculiar circumstances, amidst peculiar scenes, in a remote country. She had strong feelings, and what she strongly felt she expressed without disguise. Her figurative imaginative manner of speaking was just as natural to her as the conventional language of a French drawing-room was to her companions. The wish to attract notice or to excite admiration had never even crossed her mind.

Changeful and faint was her fair cheek's hue,
Though clear as a flower which the light
looks through,
And the glance of her dark, deep, azure eye,
For the aspect of girlhood at times too high.

On the following morning, M. Maret called on Madame d'Orgeville to inform her that Madame de Sénac greatly desired to induce her—instead of receiving the Natches prince at her own house—to accept an invitation to the *soirée* she was to give that evening, and to meet him there instead. Several distinguished personages of the court and the town, as well as some of the most eminent members of the Paris clergy, had intimated their intention of honouring her with their company.

"It would be a most brilliant *réunion*," M. Maret observed, with evident satisfaction.

If this excellent man had a weakness, it was the love of a little innocent display. Madame d'Orgeville was very gracious, and yielded with a good grace her prior right to the visit of the Indian chief. Though a little disappointed at having to put off the party she had intended to assemble on this occasion, she was pleased at being invited to the *Hôtel de Sénac*, the society of which was more decidedly aristocratic than her own.

Madame de Sénac was a widow, rich, amiable, and accomplished; her morals as unexceptionable as her character was unimpeachable. Having married a man of high rank, she had the *entrées* at court; but her own family belonging to the parliamentary noblesse, she was also connected with the financial world of that day, and her salon was a neutral territory, in which persons of various ranks and various parties met oftener than at any other house in Paris. Pious and learned ecclesiastics sometimes attended her receptions, as well as literary and worldly abbés. Courtiers and men of letters, bankers and princes, honoured

her with their company. There were certain lingering traditions of the Hôtel de Rambouillet in the tone of her more intimate society—a refinement which was beginning to be lost sight of since the days of the regency. But if some of her *habitués* maintained the noble dignity of language and of manners which prevailed in Madame de Maintenon's boudoir, others were beginning to indulge in the false sentimentality and pedantic free-thinking of the eighteenth century.

Madame d'Orgeville's satisfaction at the prospect of her first appearance in this new scene of fashion, was greatly increased by Madame de Sénac's pressing request that she would bring with her Colonel d'Auban's daughter. She foresaw that Mina's beauty, and the tie between her and the young prince, who would have been called in our days the lion of the evening, would attract considerable notice; and she spared no pains to dress her in the most becoming manner, which she had taste enough to see was as simply as possible, with just enough of peculiarity as served to recall that, notwithstanding her height, she was still almost a child, and that she had been born under a transatlantic sky.

The apartments of the Hôtel de Sénac were brilliantly lighted that evening, and coloured lamps hung amidst the foliage of its spacious garden. At an early hour, numbers of persons arrived, all anxious to witness the introduction of a native of a new—and, to them, utterly unknown—world, into a Parisian drawing-room. The Indian chief was an object of curiosity to men of science, of letters, and of piety; all such were, for different reasons, curious to watch the effects which a first sight of European civilized society would have on the young Natches.

When M. and Madame d'Orgeville arrived, the principal room was almost

full. When it became known that the young girl who accompanied them had been present at the first fearful scenes of the insurrection, and owed her life to the protection of the Indian youth now in Paris, the wish to see and to speak to her became general. As much of her story as was briefly related by the mistress of the house flew from mouth to mouth, quite a rush was made to the part of the room where she was sitting, quite unconscious of the attention she excited, and only longing for the moment of Ontara's arrival.

"Did you ever see so lovely a creature?" said the Duc d'Epéron to the Comte de Courtray.

"Better worth notice, I should say, than the Red Indian we are come to see," answered the Count.

"Can you believe she is not yet thirteen years old?"

"She looks sixteen, if not seventeen."

"What is her name?"

"D'Orban or d'Auban."

"There was a colonel of that name who rescued a number of French captives from a tribe of savages."

"Exactly so; and this girl is his daughter."

"She will not be long on his hands, if beauty achieves fortune. What eyes! What a smile! The world will be at her feet some day."

A celebrated linguist, who had been studying a vocabulary of Indian words compiled by a missionary, in order to frame a compliment to the Natches prince, requested the favour of an introduction to Mina.

"Mademoiselle, do you speak the Natches language?" he asked. "If so, will you have the kindness to instruct me how to pronounce this sentence?" Others crowding around her, begged to hear from her own lips the story of her captivity and her escape. Madame d'Orgeville, enchanted at finding herself, by means of her young com-

panion, a centre of attraction, desired Mina to comply with the request, and relate all she had witnessed of the Natches insurrection. She coloured, and her voice trembled a little, as, turning to her protectress, she said, "Where shall I begin?"

"With your arrival at the Indian city, on the eve of the massacre, my love."

The first words the child spoke in her sweet, musical, and slightly tremulous voice, arrested every one's attention. She ceased to feel shy when once she had begun. It would make everybody love Ontara, she thought, to hear how good he had been to the white captives; and to speak of the scenes so indelibly impressed on her mind, but which she never mentioned in her home, was a relief to her pent-up feelings. And so she told her simple, thrilling tale with such pathos and such natural eloquence, and her countenance lighted up with such a wonderful animation, that soon every sound was hushed in the crowded room, and every eye was fixed upon her speaking face. She described the death of the priest at the altar; the massacre which ensued; her father's escape; her mother's anguish; Ontara's generous friendship; his adoption of her as his sister; their affection for each other; their flight through the forest where the captives were doomed to death; her father's return at the head of the brave Choktaws; the rescue of the French prisoners; the struggle between Pearl Feather and Osseo; Ontara's arrival; Pearl Feather's death, and her final deliverance. Sometimes her cheeks glowed with enthusiasm, sometimes her voice trembled with excitement. Tears streamed down her face without marring its loveliness; and when she spoke of the beautiful land in which these wild scenes had been enacted, there was a mournful, impassioned tenderness in her expres-

sions and in the tone of her voice, which thrilled the bosoms of her auditors, and lingered in their ears, even when she had finished speaking, like the notes of some exquisite music. Many an eye which had long ceased to weep was moistened that day; and hearts which had forgotten what it is to feel, were conscious of an unwonted emotion.

Soon after Mina had ended her recital, whilst she was answering the many questions which were addressed to her, a servant came up to Madame de Sénac, and told her M. Maret and the Indian prince were arrived. She went to meet them, and when they entered the room, all eyes now turned on the stranger. The greatest curiosity was felt as to the way in which two young creatures would meet, who were bound to one another by so singular a tie; who had parted in a primeval forest amidst danger and death, and now stood face to face in a Paris drawing-room, under the eyes of a set of worldly men and women. Well, the refined, well-bred society was taken by surprise. They were prepared to witness an interesting scene; they did not expect to be touched to the bottom of their hearts. The moment Ontara appeared, Mina ran to him, threw her arms around his neck, and kissed his cheek. He started, his frame quivered, his eyes, which had been bent on the ground, were suddenly raised. Stepping back, he seized Mina, held her at arm's length, and gazed on her face with an intensity which seemed to pierce through her features to her very soul. In that long fixed gaze there was reminiscence, and joy, and eager questioning. At last, in his own tongue, he said, "Sister of my adoption, have you forgotten our language? Have you forgotten the land that was a garden of delight before the white man had set his foot upon it?"

"I have forgotten nothing, my broth-

er; nothing," cried Mina, her eyes filling with tears.

"Not your promise?" he eagerly exclaimed.

"No; nothing," she repeated. "I remember every word we have spoken together."

"And I, too, have not forgotten my promise," said the Indian, and he drew the sachem's crucifix from his bosom.

By this time a crowd had gathered round them, and Madame d'Orgeville, stepping forward, took Mina by the hand and made her sit down again by her side. The little hand was cold and trembling, and the child's heart—for it was, after all, still a child's heart—was beating too fast for its strength. When Ontara had asked her if she remembered her promise, she had unhesitatingly replied that she did, for it was the truth. But since she had been in France, and had become acquainted with other girls, she had begun to understand why her mother had been vexed and almost angry with her for having promised Ontara never to marry a white man. In the midst of her joy at his return, she felt a vague misgiving that her parents would not be as glad as herself to see him, and this sorely troubled her.

Meanwhile several persons were endeavouring to converse with Ontara, partly by means of signs, partly by means of the few French words he had learnt. Everybody was attracted by his appearance. He had grown very much during the two last years. His regular features; his fine melancholy eyes; the rich olive of his complexion, had all the beauty of which his race are sometimes possessed; and Mina, perfectly accustomed to the colour of the red men, and who saw in his dress, changed in many respects, but not altogether altered since his arrival in Europe, a reminiscence of the happy days of her childhood, thought there

could not be on earth a handsomer form and face than that of her adopted brother. There were traces of sorrow and of suffering, as well as of stern endurance, on his brow. His keen, intelligent countenance betokened intellectual power. To the voluble speeches and compliments addressed to him, he answered:—

"Your words are good," or, "It is well," or "Ontara thanks you;" that was almost all he could say in French.

"My sweet love," said Madame de Sénac to Mina, "some of these gentlemen wish you to ask your Indian brother what he most wishes to see in Paris. They would gladly act as his guides, and conduct him to the king's palace, or the picture galleries, or the shops, or the public gardens. Find out, my dear, what would interest him most."

Mina went up to Ontara, and after speaking a few words with him, turned round to the company. "My brother says that his father and his brethren are no more, and their palaces destroyed. He cares not to see the palace of the French chief. The beautiful gardens of his native village are uprooted, and he does not wish to look on the gardens of the great French village. His kinsmen are bondsmen; chains are on their hands, and the iron of those chains has entered into his soul. He has nothing to buy in the white man's cabins. He says there is only one place for the slave, the exile, the sad in heart, and it is there he wishes to go. To the home of the Great Spirit: to the Temple of the Christian prayer."

Mina's eyes overflowed as she translated Ontara's words.

The Bishop of Auxerre stepped forward and said to Mina, "Ask him if he wishes to be made a Christian."

She did so, and again rendered his answer into French. "The Christian's God was once sold as a slave. He had

no cabin of his own. He was an exile from his home in the skies. The sun is a bright and beautiful god, far away above our heads, but I do not care for him now. *This* God (and he touched the crucifix in his bosom) is the God of the mourner; the redeemer of the captive."

The pathos of this speech struck the men and women of the world who heard it. If there were present philosophers of the new school, inclined to scoff at the homage paid to the God of sufferers—the God made man—they were in the minority, and did not venture openly to sneer.

M. de Caylus laid his hand on Mina's shoulder, and said, "My child, tell the young chief that I will myself take him to-morrow to our great Christian temple, the cathedral of *Nôtre Dame*; and that I shall be happy to instruct him, and to prepare him for baptism."

Mina conveyed the bishop's message to Ontara, who answered something that made her smile. The bishop desired to know what he had said. "Monseigneur, Ontara says you are not a black robe; and that it is the religion of the black robes he believes in."

M. d'Auxerre laughed. "Tell him," he said, "that though I wear purple, I believe and teach the same religion as the black robes; that we are sheep of the same flock, if not birds of the same feather."

Mina exchanged a few words with Ontara, and then, turning to the bishop, said, "Monseigneur, I have told him that you are one of the chief shepherds of the flock, and he says it is well, and that your words are good."

M. de Caylus smiled, and said to M. Maret, "I will call in my carriage to-morrow, and take your young friend to *Nôtre Dame*. It is becoming that his wish should be fulfilled, and that the time-honoured walls of our old cathedral should witness his first act of

homage at the foot of a Christian altar." Then, turning to Madame d'Orgeville, he added, "Madame, I understand that this young lady remains under your care during her parents' absence. Will you permit her to act as interpreter between my neophyte and me?"

A courteous reply was given, and M. Maret proposed that his wife should call every day for Mina, and take her to M. d'Auxerre's hotel.

The bishop thanked him, and said to Mina, "You will go through a course of theology, *Mademoiselle*; and whilst teaching your deliverer you will yourself acquire knowledge."

Mina answered by a request which she made in a low voice. "Monseigneur, may Ontara and I make our first communion together?"

"I hope so, my child," the bishop kindly replied; and then he went to pay his compliments to some of the great people in the room.

Madame de Sénac had conducted Ontara into her picture gallery, and Mina was following them with her eyes, when her attention was arrested by a tall man in uniform, whom she felt sure she had seen somewhere before, and the next moment she remembered it was the gentleman who had spoken to her mother in the *Tuileries* gardens. She whispered to Madame d'Orgeville:

"Madame, what is the name of that tall officer in the doorway?"

"He is a general, my dear, and one of the bravest in the French army—the Count Maurice de Saxe."

"Ah!" thought Mina, "he said to mamma, 'Where can you find a truer friend than Maurice of Saxony?'" and then other things he had said came back to her mind: "Have we not wept over the death of another *Wilhelmina*?" and, "Dear companion of my early days!" and she mused over these



sentences, and wondered if the count would know her again, and perhaps speak to her. She could hardly fancy that he had been her mother's play-fellow—that they had gathered flowers and built reed huts, or ran races together, in their childhood. She wished he would roll up another silver plate, that Ontara might see it.

"Have you seen the wonder of the evening, M. le Comte?" said a pretty woman, dressed in the extreme of the fashion, to M. de Saxe.

"Not the Red Indian, madame, if you mean him."

"No; I mean something infinitely more attractive. A lovely Creole—a mere child, but a perfect beauty. Your eyes will be much better employed in looking at her than at the savage."

"I am quite satisfied with their present employment," answered the count, with a smile.

"Oh, but I really wish you to see this paragon. Her meeting with the Indian was the prettiest thing imaginable. I would not have missed it for all the world. Such vivacity; such charming sensibility; and then such eyes! But there she is, on the sofa near the window."

"That girl," exclaimed the count, "that young girl in white, with a single rose in her hair? Who is she? Who is she with?"

"With Madame d'Orgeville, the wife of the *Président des Comptes*."

"That lady in green, do you know her, madame? May I ask you to introduce me?"

While the count was speaking he did not take his eyes off Mina.

"Ah! M. le Comte! Have you fallen in love already?" exclaimed the lady. "Is she not charming? But how old those Creoles look! I hope they have gray hairs at thirty, or it would not be fair upon us who were frights at that young lady's age."

So saying the lady led the way across the room, and introduced M. de Saxe to Madame d'Orgeville. He bowed, and looking towards Mina, said:—

"Mademoiselle is your daughter, madame?"

"O! no, M. le Comte. My daughters are too young to go into society."

"Aye, indeed! I thought you were too young, madame, to be that young lady's mother."

"Pardon! M. le Comte. My daughters are both older than Mademoiselle d'Auban; but she was invited here to-night to meet the Indian chief, whose only acquaintance she is in what we must henceforward call the old world. It is a curious history, M. de Saxe. This young Natches saved her and her father at the time of the insurrection."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the count, seating himself by the side of Mina. "O, mademoiselle, do tell me all about it. I like of all things exciting stories; next to fighting a battle, the best thing is to hear of one."

"Is it true, M. de Saxe," said a lady who was sitting on the other side of the count, "that a troupe of actors always accompany you in your campaigns, and that, on a recent occasion, notice was given in the playbills that there would be no performance the next day on account of the battle M. le Comte de Saxe intended to give?"

"Perfectly true, madame," answered the count; "but though I am passionately fond of the play, I am not sorry sometimes to escape a theatrical performance."

And withdrawing his chair he turned again to the little girl on his left. The bystanders smiled, for, though the lady had never appeared on the stage, she had the reputation of being a consummate actress. M. de Saxe drew Mina into conversation, and made her repeat to him the story she had already told that evening. When she spoke of her

father, and the rescue of the prisoners, he said :

"I remember hearing at the time of Colonel d'Auban's gallant conduct. I wish you joy, mademoiselle. You have a brave man for your father. Will you tell him, when he returns to Paris, that the Comte de Saxe would be proud to make his acquaintance?"

Mina coloured with pleasure. "My father and mother are in Brittany," she said.

"Ah! and when do they come back?"

"I don't know," she answered, rather sadly.

The expression of her face put him so powerfully in mind of her mother at her age, that he could scarcely help saying so.

"You have been already a great traveller, Mademoiselle Wilhelmina. Should you not like to see some of the great cities of Europe?"

"I should like very much to see Rome, and Venice, and Madrid," she answered.

"And St. Petersburg, would you not like to go there?"

"No, sir; it must be so very cold."

"I'll try again," thought the count.

"Have you heard of the death of the Czar, Mademoiselle Mina?"

"I heard he was dead a moment ago. Somebody said so just before you came in. Was he not very young?"

"Very young; and he has left no brother to succeed him. Have you a brother, Mademoiselle Wilhelmina?"

She blushed very much, and answered, "Ontara is my adopted brother. When my mother was afraid Osseo would drag me away from her, Ontara adopted me as his sister, after the manner of the Indians."

"I have heard that they consider the tie of adoption as sacred as that of blood. And so you have no real brothers and sisters? Neither have I; but

when I was young I had a playfellow who was very like you."

"And did you love her very much?"

"With all my heart."

"And is that little girl dead?"

"I thought she was for a long time, but I now believe she is still alive. But I am afraid we shall never have any more happy hours together. We can never be children again. Our early years, Mademoiselle Mina, are the happiest in our lives."

"I suppose so," said Mina, pensively.

"I don't think I shall ever be so happy as I was at St. Agathe."

"Where is St. Agathe?"

"On the banks of the great Indian River in the Illinois. It is the most beautiful place in the world."

"More beautiful than Paris, or Versailles, or St. Cloud?"

Mina shrugged her shoulders in a contemptuous manner, which infinitely amazed the count.

"Were you born in America, Mademoiselle Wilhelmina?"

"Yes; at St. Agathe, and I lived there till I was nine years old. But it is sold to strangers, and I shall never see it again."

"Did your mother love it as much as you did?"

"She loved it very much, but she never talks of it now. My father was so ill after the Natches' insurrection that she does not wish to live amongst Indians. I do not think she herself would mind it."

"Do your parents intend to remain in Paris?"

"O no; my father is trying to get an appointment in the West India islands."

At that moment the conversation between the Comte de Saxe and the young girl was interrupted. M. and Madame d'Orgeville were going away. Lookers-on had wondered at the earnest manner in which the count had

been conversing with her. She said "good bye" to him in a confiding, friendly manner, which seemed, for some reason or other, to affect him. He kissed her hand with a respectful tenderness which puzzled the lady who had vainly tried to attract his attention. She wondered how he could find amusement in talking so long to a pretty child. When Mina was gone, he remained some time in the same place buried in thought. Did she or did she not know who her mother was? That was what he could not make out. She seemed quite indifferent about the death of Peter the Second, but had seemed agitated when he asked if she had a brother. He resolved to call in a few days at Madame d'Orgeville's, and to sift the mystery.

During the following week Mina was taken every day by Madame Maret to the Bishop of Auxerre's house, near the church of St. Sulpice. There she met Ontara; and it was a curious thing, in the midst of the Paris of that day, to see a girl and a youth, both totally unacquainted with the world, in the midst of which they had been suddenly thrown together, engaged, the one in teaching, the other in learning, the Christian religion. The group in Monseigneur d'Auxerre's study would have made an admirable subject for a picture. The gray-haired bishop looking kindly on the two young creatures at his feet. The dark-haired, olive-coloured youth, with his eyes fixed on the fair girl, who, half sitting, half kneeling, her hands clasped together and her soul shining through her face, translated the prelate's instructions, and by gestures and looks, as well as words, transmitted to him their meaning. It was a labour of love. The bishop had said something to the effect that Ontara would prove hereafter the future teacher of his dispersed countrymen, and she seized on the hope with enthusiasm.

He would not, she felt sure, live for himself alone. He would carry to his unhappy brethren the religion which hallows suffering, and can ennoble even the condition of a slave. His words would one day enlighten the Children of the Sun now sunk in the depths of a two-fold darkness. High and pure were the teachings of her guileless lips, and deeply did they sink into the heart of the young Indian. The aged man could scarcely restrain his tears as he looked on these children of different races, born under the same sky and endowed with such kindred natures. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength," he often thought, as Mina spoke and Ontara hearkened to her words.

Sometimes he was called out of the room on business, and then the brother and the sister stood at the window looking on the Luxembourg gardens, on the fountains and the lilacs; and talked of the grand forests and the waterfalls, the purple fields and fiery blossoms of their own land, their hearts throbbing with the pleasure and the pain of remembrance. These were Ontara's only bright hours in the city of the white men. The bishop's house appeared an oasis in what was to him a desert. The religious instructions he received there, the gradual enlightenment of his mind, the innocent affection of his adopted sister—the only tie he had in the world—gradually healed the bleeding wounds of his soul. In the afternoon, M. and Madame Maret took him to see all the sights of the capital; and in the evening they sometimes conducted him to places of public entertainment. But amusements and shows of any description had not the least attraction for him. Nothing pleased his eye except the beauties of nature. He was perfectly indifferent to art in all its shapes. But his quick intellect discerned the practical uses of

mechanical inventions, and examined with interest the wonders of physical science. Many a plan Mina and he laid together; many a castle they built in the wilderness to which their thoughts were ever turning. A temple more grand than Nôtre Dame itself was one day to rise in an American forest, and many black robes were to dwell there, and a great Christian city to rise around it. Mina and her parents would come and live in the new City of the Sun, and the black robe would join their hands before the Christian altar, and Ontara become the son of the white chief. Mina used always to shake her head when the closing scene of this vision was drawn. She knew now that French girls did not choose themselves whom they would marry, and she remembered her mother's saying that she must never marry an Indian. Then she wondered if his being a Christian would make a difference. And then the thought that the sight of one of his race made her father shudder, gave her exquisite pain. She felt as if her heart would break if her parents greeted him coldly.

They arrived in Paris about three weeks after the eventful evening at the Hôtel de Sénac. Madame d'Auban had been taken ill the day after her daughter's letter had so abruptly announced to her her son's death. She had been forced to stay some time at Hâvre, and then to travel by slow journeys. Her greatest desire now was, as has been said, to leave France, to break off all old associations, and carry Mina away to some place where they might begin life afresh. A vague disquietude stole over her as she noticed on her arrival the ever increasing loveliness, but very delicate appearance, of her daughter. The peculiar light in her eyes was more vivid than usual; there was a spiritual beauty in her face which is seldom seen in persons of strong health:—

The body tasked, the fine mind overwrought,
With something faint and fragile in the whole,
As though 'twere but a lamp to hold a soul.

Mrs. Norton.

That night, bending over her bed, her mother whispered to her, "My beloved child, henceforth pray for the repose of your brother's soul; God has taken him out of this world . . ." Tears choked her utterance.

Mina threw her arms around her neck and murmured, "O mother, may he rest in peace." Thoughts of that buried brother often haunted Mina in future years. Her father was right when he had wished her not to know any thing of the secret which was never to be actually disclosed to her. Mysteries always throw a shade over the sunny days of youth.

Mina had sat between her parents on the evening of their arrival, gazing first on the one and then on the other with the deepest tenderness. She told them Ontara had been baptized that morning. It was in the Church of St. Sulpice that the ceremony had taken place. The world had crowded to witness a novel sight; the sacred building was filled with courtiers and women of fashion. Spy-glasses were raised, whispers exchanged, questions asked and answered round Mina d'Auban, but she heeded them not. "Her eyes were with her heart," and both were bent on the youth for whom she had so long and so ardently prayed. She was kneeling near the pulpit from which the Bishop of Auxerre had been preaching, and was so absorbed in her devotions that, after the whole ceremony was over, she did not notice that Madame d'Orgeville had gone into the sacristy to speak to him, and that every one had left the church except one lady, who came up to her and touched her on the shoulder. She raised her head and recognized Mademoiselle Gaultier, whose eyes were, like her own, full of

tears. They had been both deeply moved in the midst of that careless crowd. Wide apart as earth and heaven were the state of their souls at this time, but both had felt what others had not felt. There was something in common between them, one was struggling out of the depths, the other going forward in the brightness of early morning, but both following from afar

The banner with a strange device,

Excelsior.

"Pray for me," said the actress, bending unconsciously her knee as she approached the young girl, and then disappearing before the latter had had time to recover her surprise.

People often think themselves better than they are, but it also sometimes happens that they are taken by surprise the other way. Madame d'Auban had been struggling ever since she had heard of Ontara's arrival in Paris, to conquer her involuntary coldness towards him. She was angry with herself for her ingratitude, and imagination increasing these misgivings she dreaded showing what she had persuaded herself she felt. When Mina spoke of him there was something nervous and constrained in her manner, which increased her daughter's sensitive apprehensions. But when, on the following day, the young Indian suddenly entered the room, all feelings of coldness vanished at once from her mind. The scenes of her captivity rose again before her, but with them the vivid remembrance of what that youth had done for her child and herself, and she clasped him to her heart with a tenderness heightened by the reaction which had taken place in her feelings. It was some time before she could master her emotion.

Mina's visits to the bishop continued, but now her father went with her. His intimate knowledge of the Indian language enabled him to assume the

task she had hitherto performed, and M. d'Auxerre in a few days confided to him the care of Ontara's instruction. He came every night to their lodgings, studied with Colonel d'Auban, and read with Mina. These were his happy hours. He began to understand the enjoyment of domestic life—the blessings of the Christian idea of home. His affection for Mina was unbounded. One day he said to her:—

"You are all things in one to me: my angel, for you pray for me; my teacher, for you instruct me; my sister, for you love me; my child, for I once carried you in my arms; and one day, when I have learnt all the white men can teach, you will be my wife, and we shall live in our own land in a palace covered with roses, on the shores of the beautiful river."

Mina did not believe in this palace in the new world, but she left off saying so when she saw it vexed Ontara; and she was happy to see her parents so kind to him. She was no longer anxious to leave Paris. There did not seem any immediate prospect of it. Solicitation is weary work; day after day d'Auban was disappointed of the answer he was expecting. Two out of the three months, at the end of which his wife had promised to communicate with the Comte de Saxe, had already elapsed. Mina related to her the conversation she had had with him at Madame de Sénac's. Sometimes she thought of disclosing to him her secret, and obtaining his assistance in forwarding her husband's appointment; but as soon as the idea took the form of a resolution, it caused her indescribable apprehension. It had always been in her nature to meet with courage inevitable evils, but decisions frightened her. She intensely wished to leave France, and only to send him her promised letter when the sea would be rolling between them. Every morning she

awoke with the hope that that day would be the last of tedious suspense.

One evening at dusk, as d'Auban was walking up the stairs of the house where they lodged, he met somebody coming down, who took off his hat and passed on. He could not see who it was, but his servant Antoine, who was in the ante-room of their apartments, told him it was the German, Reinhart. He had been talking, he said, to the people of the house, and he had seen him go in and out two or three times. D'Auban was much disturbed at this intelligence. He had heard, since he was in Paris, that this man was a spy, and in the pay of whatever governments chose to employ him. He did not at all like his having traced them. Whether he was still seeking evidence about the jewels, or was on the scent of a still more important discovery, in both cases he dreaded the consequences, and began to consider if it would not be desirable to leave Paris at once, or at least to send his wife to some place where she would be out of this man's way. One measure of prudence he thought it necessary to suggest to her: this was to pack up and hide the jewels she still possessed.

"I have nothing now of any value," she said. "Perhaps we had better sell what there is. . . ."

"On no account," he exclaimed. "That would be most imprudent. But, my dearest, what do you mean by nothing of value? Where is the locket, with the czar's picture?"

She smiled, and said, "I did not mean to tell you, but as you ask about it, I suppose you must needs be informed that I parted with the diamonds last September, when I wanted money to pay the doctor and our lodgings in the Rue du Louvre. Part of that sum I still have in bank notes. What is the matter?" she asked, alarmed at ob-

serving a look of annoyance in her husband's face.

"Oh, my dearest love," he said, "why did you not speak to me before you sold that locket?"

"I did not sell the picture, Henri, only the diamonds. You were ill, and I was determined you should not be troubled about money matters."

"I know. I see how it was. You are an angel of goodness. But whom did you sell them to?" d'Auban asked, trying not to seem anxious.

"To a dealer in diamonds, whose direction I got from M. Lenoir, Wisbach, a German."

"Good heavens! an agent of the Russian Embassy. O, my own precious one, you who thought to save me anxiety! Well, but never mind. Do not be unhappy. I have no doubt it is all right."

"But what do you fear, Henri?"

"Why, my dearest, you know that years ago in America there were inquiries made and reports circulated about your jewels having been stolen. And if these diamonds should be recognized and traced to you, no explanation can be offered but *the one*. . . ."

"O, but the picture was not seen. Only the setting; only the locket. . . ."

"But, my dear heart, this man Wisbach has for years and years executed all the orders for jewellery at the Imperial Court. I should not be surprised if he had made that locket himself. Do not be frightened. I only want you to see the necessity of prudence. If you will put the picture and the trinkets together, and seal them up in a box, I will take the parcel to M. Maret, who will, I know, take charge of it for me, without inquiring as to its contents."

Madame d'Auban, who had now become a little nervous, went to fetch a box out of her bedroom. She took out of it the miniature, and a few chains and broaches, and was just placing them

in a small case, whilst her husband was lighting a candle, and looking for sealing-wax, when they were startled by a sound of steps on the stairs. She had scarcely time to thrust back all the things into the large box, before two men entered, and announcing themselves as police agents, arrested them both. One of them instantly began searching the box and the drawers in the adjoining room. The picture and the trinkets were of course discovered, and one of the men nodded to the other, and said, "That's it." D'Auban was confounded at the strangeness of their position. His usual coolness and presence of mind almost forsook him in this complicated embarrassment. Under the weight of so plausible an accusation and such overwhelming evidence, the only defence that could be set up would of necessity appear an absurd invention, a preposterous lie. It seemed to him incredible at that moment that he had not more fully realized the danger hanging over them from the possession of those things. He felt stunned and bewildered. There was no time to confer with his wife on the steps they should take, or the answers they should give when separately examined, which he knew must follow. Would even his own friends believe his story? They had known him long and well, but her scarcely at all. Sooner than give credit to so improbable a story, they might deem that he had been taken in by an impostor. These thoughts passed through his mind with the quickness of lightning, for the whole scene did not last more than two or three minutes. He asked leave to write a few words to M. d'Orgeville. This was refused, with a hint that such a note might convey instructions for removing other stolen property. They scarcely allowed Madame d'Auban time to put up a change of clothes, and to kiss her daughter. She was taken too much by surprise to

be able to collect her thoughts. She could only strain her to her breast. D'Auban called Antoine, who was standing pale and trembling at the door, and said, "Take care of her. Take her to the Hotel d'Orgeville. Tell them that through some extraordinary mistake we are accused of a crime, and thrown into prison."

"No more talking, if you please," said one of the police agents, and hurried them down stairs. When Madame d'Auban had reached the last step she turned round to look at her daughter, who was following her in silence; too agitated to speak, too terrified to weep.

"Mina!" she cried, as the carriage-door closed upon her. What more she said the young girl could not hear. When it had disappeared she slowly went up stairs again. Antoine was frightened at her still composed look.

"Ah! Mademoiselle Mina," he cried, "for God's sake do not look so. You make my heart ache. But I am sure it is no wonder. To see monsieur and madame go off in such company, and to such a place, is enough to upset one. I am ashamed of my country, that I am. Let me get you some wine and water, mademoiselle, you are nearly fainting?"

"No, Antoine; I am thinking," answered the child, with her head resting on her hands, and an expression of intense thoughtfulness on her brow. The colour gradually returned to her cheeks, and she breathed a deep sigh. When Antoine had brought her the wine and water, she swallowed it, and then said:

"Where are they gone, Antoine? I mean to what prison?"

The utterance of that word loosened the springs of sorrow, and Mina burst into tears. Then poor old Antoine was as anxious to stop her from crying, as he had been before that she did not cry.

"Where—where?" she sobbed, whilst he stroked her hand, and kissed it.

"To the Conciergerie," he said, in a low voice; and then he added, "It is all a great mistake. They will come back very soon. But we must do as your papa said, and go to the Hotel d'Orgeville."

"No, Antoine, I am not going there; not yet, I mean."

"And where are you then going, mademoiselle?"

"Do you know where the Comte de Saxe lives?"

"No, mademoiselle; but perhaps I can find out. But why do you want to know?"

"Because I must see him immediately—immediately, Antoine."

Antoine shook his head. "Monsieur said I was to take you to the Hotel d'Orgeville."

"I won't go there till I have seen the Comte de Saxe. So it is no use asking me, Antoine. Come with me, and we will go and find out where he lives."

Antoine was so accustomed to do whatever Mademoiselle Mina wished, and so agitated with the scene he had witnessed, that he was really more in need of guidance than she was. So he passively submitted; and when she had put on her hat and shawl he followed her into the street. She then stopped, and asked him, "Do you think M. Drouin, the bookseller, will know where M. de Saxe lives?"

"Most likely he may," Antoine answered, and they walked there.

M. Drouin's shop was a large dark warehouse in the Rue St. Sulpice, where piles of volumes were ranged in far-stretching recesses and apparently inaccessible shelves. Mina timidly approached the counter. A lady was sitting with her back to the entrance door, and a pretty little boy of six or seven years of age standing by her. She was choosing a book for him.

"I don't want a book," said the child; "I want you to stay with me."

"Why, my good child," answered the lady, in a voice Mina remembered to having heard before, "I can't stay where I am and be good, and if people are not good they don't go to heaven; and you and I, Anselm, want to meet there some day."

"I think you are very good," answered the boy, in an aggrieved tone, "you give me every thing I want."

At that moment, the lady heard Mina ask the shopman if he could tell her where the Comte de Saxe lived. She turned round and their eyes met. Mademoiselle Gaultier recognized the young girl whose prayers she had asked in the Church of St. Etienne du Mont; she made way for her with a courteous smile.

"At the Hotel de Saxe, Rue du Palais Royal," the shopman answered.

"Is it far from here?" Mina anxiously inquired, and when the man answered, "pretty well," Mademoiselle Gaultier caught the sound of a little tremulous sigh.

"Excuse me," she said, in a kind manner, to the young girl, "but do you want to see the Comte de Saxe?"

"O, yes; very, very much," answered Mina, "I must see him as soon as possible."

"Why *must* you see him?" said Mademoiselle Gaultier, in a good-humoured off-hand manner.

"Because he is the only person who can help me."

Mademoiselle Gaultier felt in her pocket for her purse. "Excuse me, my dear, but is it any thing about which money can be of use?"

"No, no, thank you, it would not do any good." Mina turned away and was hurrying out of the shop.

"Stop a moment," cried Mademoiselle Gaultier, struck with the expression of her beautiful face. "If it is

indeed important that you should see the Comte de Saxe without delay, I can take you to my house, where he dines to-day. By the time you get to his hotel he will have left it."

She pointed to her carriage and said, "Get in."

Mina looked at Antoine, who was standing by her. "I *must* see the Comte de Saxe, Antoine."

"Then get in," repeated Mademoiselle Gaultier.

"Not without me," said the old man, resolutely.

"Well, sit on the box then, and tell the coachman to drive to the Rue de la Michaudière."

The little boy got in also, and they drove off. The child began to cry bitterly.

"Come, come, Anselm. This will never do. Men do not cry."

"But little boys do, and I must cry if you go away."

"Nonsense, I never told you I was going away. But you must go home to your father, and he will send you to a good school, where you will have plenty of little boys to play with."

The child threw his arms round her neck.

"There now," she said, when the carriage stopped, "kiss me, and get out."

She watched him into the house, and then said, as if speaking to herself rather than to Mina, "Ah, that comes of doing a good action; one never knows what the end of it will be. I took that child because it was motherless, and his father was too poor to keep him, and made a pet of it when it was little, as if he had been a puppy or a kitten. But when the creature began to speak and to say its prayers, and to ask me questions about the good God, I did not like it."

"Why not?" said Mina, looking at her with astonishment.

"No, what could a person who never prayed herself say to a child like that?"

"Do you not pray? I am sure you did the day Ontara was baptized. Do not you thank God for having made you so beautiful, and so strong too?" Mina added, remembering the scene in the Tuileries Gardens.

It had never yet occurred to Mademoiselle Gaultier to thank God for her strength, but, some years afterwards, she remembered Mina's words whilst carrying an aged woman out of a house that was on fire. She looked fixedly at her now, and then murmured, "The rest of my life will be too short to thank Him, if . . ." there she stopped, and turning away, did not speak again till they reached her house in the Rue St. Maur.

Nothing could exceed the luxury displayed in this abode. Lovely pictures covered the walls, knick-knacks of every sort adorned every corner of it. Flowers in profusion, and little mimic fountains throwing up scented waters, perfumed the hall, and gave each room an *air de fête*. Mademoiselle Gaultier conducted Mina into a small boudoir within a dining room, where a table, ornamented with a gilded plateau and magnificent bouquets, was laid for twenty guests. In an adjoining drawing-room several gentlemen and ladies were already assembled, who greeted its mistress in the gayest manner. One of these guests was the Comte de Saxe. When he saw Mina with Mademoiselle Gaultier he started back amazed, hesitated a moment, and then rushed after them into the boudoir.

Before any one else had time to speak, Mina cried out the instant she saw him, "Oh, M. de Saxe, save my mother."

"Will you leave us a moment?" said the count to Mademoiselle Gaultier.

She turned round and saw that Antoine had made good his entrance, and was watching his young mistress like a faithful dog. "Very well," she said, and shut the door upon them.

"Now, my child," said the count, in German, "what is the matter? What of your mother?"

"She is in prison, and my father also," cried Mina, wringing her hands.

"In prison. Good God! Why? Where? For debt?"

"No," answered Mina, her cheeks as red as fire, and her lip quivering. "For stealing diamonds! They steal!"

"Diamonds!" said the count.

"Yes, diamonds mamma has had a long time, as long as I can remember. She sold them when papa was so ill, and she wanted money. They were round a picture of a gentleman in uniform, which she sometimes showed me when I was little. The men who took papa and mamma to prison found this picture, and said it was the proof they wanted."

"Ah! I think I understand," ejaculated the count. "Did your father know of this picture?"

"Yes; but he did not know till to-day, just before these men came, that mamma had sold the diamonds. He seemed sorry when she told him. Oh, M. de Saxe, you told mamma that if she ever wanted a devoted heart and a strong arm to defend her, she was to think of you. Will you help her now, and my father also?"

"I must go to the king, there is no other way. What prison is it?"

"The Conciergerie," said Antoine, stepping forward.

"Do you know at whose instance M. and Madame d'Auban have been arrested?"

"The huissiers said it was at the request of the Russian ambassador."

"Confound him! Ah! I must begin by making sure of that point. Do

you know to whom your mother sold the diamonds, Mdlle. Mina?"

"To a man named Wisbach, in the Rue de l'Ecu."

"I know him; a German jeweller."

"Will the king let them out of prison, M. de Saxe?"

"I hope so, my sweet child. I will do every thing I can to help you. In the mean time, in whose care do you remain?"

"His," said Mina, pointing to the old servant; "our dear, good Antoine. My father said I was to go to the Hotel d'Orgeville, and say that through some mistake they had been arrested, but—"

"But you had much better not do so now, Mdlle. Mina. Go with this good man, wherever you live. Where is it by the way?"

"30, Rue des Saints Pères."

"Well go there, and if any one calls, let him answer that your parents are out."

"And if Ontara comes?"

"Is that the Natches prince?"

"Yes; my adopted brother."

"Would he be discreet?"

"An Indian would die rather than betray a secret."

"Well, then, you may see him, my little princess."

The count watched to see if that appellation made any impression on Mina; but seeing it did not, he went on—

"Now do not weep, do not be anxious, sweet Wilhelmina. The Comte de Saxe would sooner die than evil should befall your mother."

"Was she the little girl you loved so much?" Mina asked.

"She was," the count answered, with emotion; "and she is the mother of a not very little girl, whom I am beginning to love also very much."

"And I shall love you very dearly, if you get papa and mamma out of prison."

Meantime dinner was begun in the next room, and the noise of laughing and talking reached their ears. The Comte de Saxe opened the door and made his excuses to Mademoiselle Gaultier. He said that pressing business obliged him to forego her hospitality.

"I conclude," he added, "that you will have the kindness to send this young lady home?"

"I will see her home myself," answered Mademoiselle Gaultier, rising from the table.

"Good bye, M. de Saxe," she added, and her voice faltered again, as it had done in the carriage, and under her rouge her cheeks turned deadly pale.

"Come, my dear, eat something before you go," she said to Mina.

"No, thank you, dear lady; I could not eat. I will drink some water, if you please."

Mademoiselle Gaultier poured out some for her, and a glass of wine for herself. Her hand trembled so much that she spilt it. She rose, sat down again, and said to her guests:

"I know you will excuse my treating you with so little ceremony. I *must* go, or I would not leave you."

Her eyes wandered round the table! she seemed to be looking at each of her friends in turn—one of them was stipulating that she should not be longer away than a quarter of an hour; another laughingly declaring they would make themselves very happy in her absence; others protesting against being deprived of her society even for five minutes. Once again she got up, took Mina by the hand, and went to the door. She stood there an instant, looking at the table she had left, at the pictures, at the furniture, with a dreamy expression. Her guests thought she was gone, and had begun again to talk and to laugh amongst themselves.

"Come," she said to Mina, who was struck by the strangeness of her man-

ner. They went downstairs and got into the carriage, which had been all this time waiting at the door. The horses were impatient and restive. The coachman whipped them, and they plunged. Mademoiselle Gaultier sprang out again, pulling Mina with her into the house. She sank on a chair in the hall, and gave a sort of half cry, half groan, which rang through the house. The company in the dining-room heard it, and wondered what it was. They little guessed whence it proceeded.

"I cannot," she murmured. "My God! I cannot go; the effort is too great."

A singular instinct seemed to inspire Mina at that moment. She guessed there was a struggle between right and wrong in that woman's heart. Without knowing what she was leaving, or where she was going, she seized her hand, and cried—

"Come, come; Oh, do come away!"

There are moments when the whole of a person's existence—when even their eternal destiny—seems to hang on an apparently casual circumstance; when good and bad angels are watching the upshot. Mina's own heart was overcharged with sorrow, and she longed to get away from the sound of voices and laughter which reached them where they sat. She clung to Mdlle. Gaultier, and again said: "Come *now*, or you will *never* come." She did not know the strength of her own words. They fell on the actress's ear with prophetic force. Madame de Staël says, that the most mournful and forcible expression in our language "is no more." Perhaps the words "now or never," have a still more thrilling power. They have been the war-cry of many a struggle—the signal of many a victory.

Once again Mdlle. Gaultier got into the carriage with Mina, and they drove

to the Rue des Saints Pères. She wept bitterly. It was odd, perhaps, that she should give thus a free vent to her feelings before a child and stranger, but she was a very singular person; a great impulsiveness—a careless frankness—had always marked her character.

"I am very glad I met you, my dear," she said to her young companion, who was trying to thank her. "You have done more for me to-day than you can now, or than you will perhaps ever understand. It was just what I wanted to help me through the operation I am undergoing."

"What operation, dear lady?"

"An operation you may have read of in the Gospel, my dear. Cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye, rather than walking into hell with them. May your sweet eyes and your little innocent feet never need plucking out and cutting off! It hurts, I can tell you!"

"I would cut off my hand, and have my eyes burnt out, if that would make all my own people Christians," Mina answered, eagerly.

"I do not know who are your people, little one; but I have heard of innocent souls, angels in human form, glad to suffer for the guilty and the perishing, and I think you may be one of them. . . . I, too, had such thoughts when I was your age. . . ."

"And why did you let them go?" Mina said. "I felt sure you were good the first day I saw you."

"What could make you think so, dear child?"

"You looked good, though you did push the German lady into the mud."

The mention of this incident caused a revulsion in Mademoiselle Gaultier's nervous system. She burst into an hysterical fit of laughter. "What a wretch I have been," she exclaimed; and then, after a pause, said, "I ought to have been good, but I was not suf-

fered to be so. An orphan and a dependent, I prayed for a bare pittance to keep me off the stage. But my relatives would not hearken to my pleadings. They said I had beauty and wit, and must shift for myself. I have done so, God knows how!"

"But you can, you will be good now?"

The carriage stopped at the door of Mina's lodgings. She threw her arms round Mademoiselle Gaultier's neck, and said again, as she pressed her lips to her cheeks, "You will be good now?" It was like the whisper of an angel. Another voice had been urging, "Return to your pleasant home—to your gay friends—your luxurious life. You never can fast, obey, and pray for the rest of your life." It was the decisive hour—on the order then given to drive to one place or the other—on these few words the future turned. She bade the coachman go to the convent of the Anticailles. In after years, when she could afford to look back and write, with the gaiety of a grateful heart, an account of that terrible struggle, she spoke of the rude pallet on which she slept that night, of the bits of cold stewed carp she ate for supper, and said it was the sweetest sleep, and the best meal, she had enjoyed for many a long year.

Two years later, the Parisian world flocked to the Carmelite convent of the Rue St. Jacques—the same where Louise de la Vallière had fled half a century before—to see one of the first actresses of the French stage, the witty, the handsome Mademoiselle Gaultier, put on St. Thérèse's habit, and renounce for ever the world which had so long burnt unholy incense at her feet. She retained in the cloister the eager spirit, the indomitable gaiety, the intellectual gifts, with which she had been so rarely endowed. She spoke from behind the grate with the eloquence of former days, only the subject-matter was

changed. "Wonders will never cease!" the world said, at the news of Made-moiselle Gaultier's conversion, and the world was right. As long as it lasts, miracles of grace will take it by surprise.

CHAPTER VII.

Nothing till that latest agony,
Which severs us from nature, shall unloose
This fixed and sacred hold.

* * * * *

I never will forsake thee.

Johanna Baillie.

Tones in her quivering voice awoke
As if a harp of battle spoke;
Light that seem'd born of an eagle's nest
Flashed from her soft eyes unrepress'd,
And her form, like a spreading water-flower,
When its frail cup swells with a sudden shower,
Seem'd all dilated with love and pride.

Mrs. Hemans.

AT about six o'clock that day, his majesty Lewis the well-beloved, the idol of his people, one of the most pleasing and attractive men of his time, was sitting in his private apartments at Versailles, conversing with the queen to whom he was still devotedly attached. The young dauphin and his little sisters were playing about the room. The gentleman in waiting brought in a letter for the king, who read it, and smiled.

"Our good friend the Comte de Saxe," his majesty said, "entreats the favour of an immediate interview. In order, I suppose, to pique our curiosity, he pledges himself to make known to us a history that we shall with difficulty credit, so like does it sound to a tale of fiction, but which he nevertheless declares to be perfectly true."

"Your majesty is always glad to see the Comte de Saxe, and will doubtless accede to his request, and direct that he be admitted."

"Ah! madame. Is there not some feminine curiosity lurking in your implied desire to receive the noble count?"

"I confess, sire, that a romance in real life is well fitted to excite the interest of one whose own destiny might be described under that name."

As she said this, Marie Leckzinska looked with tenderness at the king, whom she passionately loved.

The young monarch, for although the father of four children, Lewis the XV. was scarcely three and twenty years old, commanded the Comte de Saxe to be introduced. Like most sovereigns, the king of France liked to be treated with the cautious familiarity which some persons know how to use without trespassing the limits of respect. Perhaps he liked the familiarity more than the respect. The sovereign who, in his maturer years, allowed Madame Dubarry to treat him as a laquais, and to call him *La France*, could not have had at any time much dignity of character; but in his youth there was something attractive in this royal bonhomie. The Comte de Saxe perfectly understood his royal master's disposition and tastes, and stood high in his good graces.

"Ah! M. de Saxe," the king ex-

claimed, as the count made his obeisance to him and to the queen, "welcome to Versailles. Would that you took us oftener by surprise. It is one of the ennui of our position to have no unexpected pleasures. Our life is so mapped out beforehand that I sometimes fancy to-morrow is yesterday, I know so well all about it."

A shade of anxiety passed over the queen's face. The king's liability to ennui was her greatest trouble. She had none of the lively wit or piquancy of manner which aids a woman to retain her hold of the affection of a man of indolent temperament and idle habits.

"I hope," she said to the count, "that you are not about to harass our feelings too deeply by the history you are going to tell us."

"Ah! madame—the cause I have to plead"

"O come!" exclaimed the king, "this is not fair, you spoke of a romantic story and now hint at a petition."

"I have indeed a petition to make, sire, and no trifling one either—no less a one than for the immediate release of two prisoners."

The king looked annoyed.

"And it must be the act of your majesty; an order emanating from yourself alone."

"You should have spoken to M. de Fréjus."

"No, sire, to your majesties alone could I communicate the story of a princess of royal birth, whose unexampled destiny places her at your mercy."

"A princess!" repeated the king, "of what nation?"

"A German, sire."

"Ah! they are innumerable, your German princesses," Madame des Ursins said to the minister of a small Teutonic Prince, who had rejected the hand of a Spanish lady of high rank. "Monsieur,

une grandesse d'Espagne vaut bien une petitesse d'Allemagne." Is your princess, M. de Saxe, une petitesse d'Allemagne?"

"So far from it, sire," rejoined the count, "that, had she been fifteen years younger, she might have aspired to your majesty's hand, for her sister was the wife of the Emperor of Austria, and the House of Hapsburg deemed it no mésalliance."

"Who can you be speaking of, M. de Saxe? What emperor do you mean? The present emperor was married to the eldest daughter of the Duke of Brunswick, Wolfenbittel, and her sister married the Czarowitch of Russia."

"Sire, the sister of the late Empress of Austria, the daughter of the Duke of Brunswick, the widow of the Czarowitch, is at this moment in the prison of the Conciergerie, and it is on her behalf I have come to implore your majesty!"

"My dear M. de Saxe, you are under a strange delusion, for I suppose you are not joking!"

"Sire, I never was further from it in my life."

"But the princess you speak of has been dead these fifteen years."

"Sire, she is not dead. How she happens to be alive I did not know till two months ago, when I met her in the Tuilleries Gardens. The sound of her voice first arrested my attention; then I caught sight of her face, and though more than sixteen years had elapsed since I had seen her, I recognized at once the Princess Charlotte of Brunswick. Sire, I had been her playmate in childhood—later, she honoured me with her friendship. I loved her as those love who can never hope to be loved in return; with an intense, hopeless, reverent affection; she was a woman who, when once known, could never be forgotten."

"I have heard my beloved father

“He used to say that her eyes had a melancholy beauty, a dreamy softness peculiarly their own, and that to look upon her and to love her was the same thing.”

“Madame, I verily believe that in body and in mind so rare a creature has seldom graced a palace or a cottage. From the very moment I saw her I had not a doubt as to her identity. She turned away, she tried to put me off, to avoid answering my abrupt and eager questions; but her tears, her changing colour, her passionate emotion, betrayed her. She refused, however, to give me any clue as to the name she bore or the place of her residence. I wished to inform your majesty at once of the existence of the princess, but she extorted from me a promise to delay this disclosure for three months. When I lost sight of her that day doubts as to my own sanity occurred to me, for the death of the Czarrowitch’s consort was a well-known public event. All the Courts in Europe had gone into mourning for her; and the thought of the interview I had just had with the living-dead was a fact enough to drive reason from its throne. A sudden recollection flashed then on my brain. I remembered having seen amongst my mother’s papers, when I was sorting them after her death, a packet, on which was written, ‘particulars relating to the supposed death of ——. To be read by my son after my decease.’ Pressed as I was at that moment by a multiplicity of affairs, I put off opening this packet to a period of greater leisure. The events of the campaign and my return to Paris put it out of my mind, until suddenly the words ‘supposed death’ flashed across me like a ray of light. I wrote for the box in which I had left this packet, and only a few days ago made myself acquainted with its contents.”

“And did it relate to the princess?”

eagerly asked, in the same breath, the king and the queen.

“It did, madame, and sire—if my mother erred, if she acted with precipitation, if she allowed her fears for the life of a beloved friend to get the better of her prudence, now that she is no more, your majesties will pity and excuse a woman’s pity for a woman. I know not how to judge an unprecedented action. Unwonted dangers call for extraordinary remedies. This paper, sire, gives a full account of the manner in which the Comtesse de Konigsmark, in conjunction with the attendants of the Czarrowitch’s consort, spread the report of her decease after her brutal husband had left her apparently dead. It was well known to the princess’s friends that Alexis had resolved on her destruction, and that assassins were at hand to do his work in case she recovered. They placed a wooden figure in the coffin ostensibly prepared for the princess, and tended her in a secluded chamber until she had strength enough to make her escape from Russia, and the doom which awaited the Czarrowitch’s wife. In a separate letter my mother lays her commands upon me not to divulge these facts unless a time should come when the princess might desire to establish her identity. I have brought these documents with me, sire, and I place in your majesty hands the evidence of my mother’s daring act, and of the existence of the Princess Charlotte of Brunswick.”

“This is indeed a wonderful history,” said the king as he began to peruse the papers.

The queen in the mean time asked, “And where did the princess fly when she left Russia?”

“To the new France, madame, accompanied by one only servant and humble friend—the librarian of her father’s court, who had followed her to St. Petersburg.”

"And how comes she here? and good heavens! did not you say she was in prison?"

"Madame, she was arrested this morning, at the instance of the Russian embassy. It seems that when she escaped from St. Petersburg, she carried away with her jewels which were her own private property, and sold a part of them on her arrival at New Orleans. These trinkets, of course, were missed; and orders given at the Russian embassies and consulates to institute inquiries as to the persons who were supposed to have taken them. Suspicion rested principally on one individual, who had disappeared at the time of the princess's supposed death, the old German librarian who had accompanied her in her flight. It does not seem however that the inquiry was actively followed up in the colony; but a bracelet, which the princess sold since her arrival in Paris, has been recognized by a jeweller who many years ago had himself executed the order for it. In conjunction with a German who had seen the royal exile in America, and was aware of the suspicions afloat on the subject, he gave information to Prince Kourakin of the discovery he had made. Hence, the princess's arrest on a charge which places her amongst felons and thieves, unless his majesty interposes at once to rescue her from such a position."

The king looked up from the papers he had been perusing, and made the count repeat again the foregoing details. Then he said, "Of course, the princess must be at once released. These documents, M. de Saxe, leave no doubt on my mind that the lady you recognized in the Tuileries Gardens is the same person the Comtesse de Koenigsmark speaks of, the widow of the late Czarowitch. But what sort of existence has she led during all these late years? Where did she live, and with whom?"

"Sire," said the count, in the tone of a man who makes a reluctant confession, "the romance would not be complete without a love story."

"Ah," said the king laughing, "is it one that you can relate before the queen?"

"Sire," said the Comte de Saxe, with some emotion, "I know but little of the Princess Charlotte's history during those years of obscure seclusion. But I would willingly lay down my life that her heart is as pure and her life as unstained as that of her majesty herself," he added, bowing profoundly to Marie Leckzinska. Since the Czarowitch's decease, sire, his widow has married a French gentleman, and a brave man, who at the time of the Natches insurrection, by prodigies of valour saved her and many other French women from the horrors of a lingering death."

Without uttering an untruth, the count had managed to make it appear that the marriage had followed instead of preceded this heroic exploit. Gratitude, he thought, might be considered as a *circonstance atténuante*.

"I do not see," said the king, "how that difficulty can be got over. Such a marriage can never be acknowledged by her relations. Are there children?"

"One girl, sire."

The king reflected a little, and then said, "I will write with my own hand a letter to the Queen of Hungary, and inform her of her aunt's existence, and of the proofs which establish it. If I judge by my own feelings she will gladly offer to receive her at her own court, and to provide for her in her dominions a home suitable to her rank. She must, of course, give up this second husband. I forget if you mentioned his name?"

"Colonel d'Auban, sire."

"This d'Auban she must, of course, separate from; but as you say he is a brave officer, I will take care of his

fortune and place him in a good position. The daughter can be educated at St. Cyr."

The queen looked anxiously first at M. de Saxe and then at the king. Her woman's heart evidently shrunk from this summary disposal of the nearest and dearest ties of a woman's heart. She ventured to say, "But if this princess is attached to her husband and her child, would it not be possible—"

"Possible, madame, for the Queen of Hungary to call M. d'Auban uncle, and his daughter cousin! Heaven forbid that any royal family should admit of such a degradation—"

"No; what I meant was that perhaps she would not give them up."

"Then, of course, her family could not acknowledge her."

M. de Saxe was growing very impatient at this lengthened discussion, and ventured to say:

"Sire, every moment must appear an age to the princess, who has already been many hours in prison."

"But what would be the best course to pursue?" answered the king. "This strange story must not be divulged until I receive the answer of the Queen of Hungary. It would not be just to her royal relatives to forestall their decision as to the Princess Charlotte's reassumption of her name and position. But she cannot, of course, remain in prison, or in a mean lodging. She had better be instantly removed from the Conciergerie to one of our royal palaces—to Fontainebleau, for instance, and there await her niece's answer. But how can this release be explained to the Russian embassy?"

"Will your majesty permit me to call on Prince Kourakin, and to inform him that it is your royal pleasure that the prosecution be abandoned?"

"He will think it strange that I should interfere."

"Not so strange, perhaps, as your

majesty supposes. I am greatly mistaken if there is not one person at least at the embassy who suspects the truth."

"Ah! think you so, M. de Saxe? Then I commend to your prudence that part of the negotiation. I must see M. de Fréjus, and give orders under our signet to remove this royal lady to our palace of Fontainebleau. Madame d'Auban, is not that the name she goes by? Well, M. de Saxe, it must be admitted that you have redeemed your pledge, and unfolded to us as romantic a tale as the pages of history or of fiction have ever recorded. We will not detain you any longer, M. le Comte. As Hermione says to Pyrrhus:—

*Tu comptes les instants que tu perds avec moi;
Ton cœur impatient de revoir ta Troyenne,
Ne souffre qu'à regret qu'une autre t'entretienne;
Tu lui parles du cœur, tu la cherches des yeux.*

Ah! how inimitably Mdle. Gaultier repeats those lines. By the way, is it true that Hermione is about to retire from the stage and the world? M. de Fréjus says she will be a Carmelite."

"And so will I, my papa king," said a little voice from behind the queen's fauteuil. This was Madame Louise de France, then only two years old. Thirty years later she was kneeling at her father's feet to obtain leave to live and die behind the grate of the monastery of St. Denis. The king took her on his knees, and played with her whilst he went on talking to the Comte de Saxe.

"You must leave with me the Comtesse de Konigsmark's letters. I must forward a copy of her statement to the Queen of Hungary. Who knows, M. le Comte, if we hunt this week in the direction of Fontainebleau, and very probably we shall," the king said, with a laugh, "that we may not visit this fair spectre?"

"I should also very much like to see her, if it would not attract too much notice," the queen said. "I used to

hear so much in my childhood of the Princess Charlotte of Brunswick and her beautiful blue eyes."

"Your majesty will graciously include in the order of release the princess's husband?" asked the Comte de Saxe, as he was taking his leave.

"Yes, yes," the king gaily answered; "but he is not to come to Fontainebleau, or his daughter either. Princesses cannot marry commoners and enjoy at the same time the privileges of royalty."

"And what happens if they like commoners better than privileges?" said Madame Victoire, the eldest of the Enfants de France.

"They are in disgrace," his majesty answered, with a smile.

"Is M. de Saxe a commoner, and are you, sire, a privilege?"

The Queen ordered Madame Victoire to be silent, and said something tantamount to little pitchers having long ears. At last M. de Saxe was suffered to depart. He was not quite satisfied at the turn things had taken. From his brief interview with the Princess, and what he had seen of her daughter, he had a strong impression

That ties around her heart were spun
Which could not, would not be undone.

The king, though in the main good-natured and kind-hearted, did not like contradiction. Who does but those who, through a long training, have overcome their distaste to it? The order for Madame d'Auban's removal to Fontainebleau, pending the answer of her relatives, sounded somewhat like an honourable imprisonment. He dreaded the suffering she might undergo from the anomalies in her position, and the uncertainty of the future. Would she blame him for disclosing her story to the king? Not, he supposed, under the circumstances which had compelled him to do so; but women are not always reasonable. The

count felt anxious and out of humour with the king, the princess, the world, and himself. Men of prodigious strength and strong will, who can conquer almost every thing except themselves, get as irritated with complicated difficulties as women with an entangled skein of silk. They long to cut through the knot, but if they have not at hand either knife or scissors there remains nothing for it but to chafe at the obstacle.

It was near twelve o'clock at night when the count arrived at the prison door, and with great trouble succeeded in rousing the porter and obtaining an entrance. Mentioning his own name, and slipping a louis d'or into his hand, he asked for news of the prisoners who had arrived there that day. The sight of gold awakened the attention of the sleepy Cerberus, who produced a book of entries, which was kept in the entrance lodge.

"Yes," he said, turning over the leaves till he found the last page, and running his finger down it, "here are the names of the people you are speaking of, M. de Saxe. Henri George d'Auban and Sophia Charlotte his wife. They were lodged in separate cells in the fifth ward of the third story."

"I must see them directly," said the count. "I have the king's order to that effect. Let the governor of the prison know that I am here."

"I am very sorry," said old Adam, tightly clutching the gold piece in his hand, "but your excellency cannot see them, for—"

"I will see them," cried the Count Saxe.

"But it is impossible, for—"

"Nothing is impossible," said the count, stamping. "My soldiers are never allowed to use that word, neither shall you. Take your keys and show me the way to the governor or the prisoners' rooms."

"But when I tell you, M. le Comte—"

"And I tell you, M. le Guichetior, that I will take no denial."

Then cried the man, "you must quarrel with the good God, and not with me; for he can work miracles and I can't."

"Miracles! nonsense! Show me the way."

"But I tell you, sir, they are gone!" roared out the man, who had now slipped into his pocket the count's louis d'or.

"Gone! The devil they are! Where?"

"I don't know."

"How came they to be released?"

"The governor ordered them to be set at liberty about three hours ago, that's all I know. I never ask questions about those that come in or those that go out."

Exceedingly puzzled, but at the same time relieved, the count withdrew. Early on the following morning he ordered his carriage and drove to the lodging of which Antoine and Mina had given him the direction on the preceding day. Having ascertained from the concierge that this was the house where M. and Madame d'Auban lived, and that they were at home, he rapidly mounted the stairs and rang at the door of the entresol, which was opened by a tall, careworn, but still handsome man, whom he guessed must be Henri d'Auban.

"Am I speaking to Colonel d'Auban?" he asked; and immediately added, "I am the Comte de Saxe."

D'Auban eagerly invited him in, and said, "I know how very very kind you have been to my daughter, M. le Comte, and most glad I am to have the opportunity of thanking you. Pray come into the next room and sit down."

Mina was giving Ontara a French lesson. She jumped up, and eagerly greeting the Comte de Saxe, said, "They came home last night. I had watched at the window till I fell fast

asleep on the chair; and it was mamma's kisses which woke me."

"May your wakings be ever as sweet, Mademoiselle Wilhelmina."

At that moment Madame d'Auban came in from the back room. She was taken by surprise and hesitated an instant; then holding out her hand to the count, she said, "Oh Maurice! that child has told me how good you have been to her, and what you meant to do for us."

"May I speak?" answered the count, glancing at Mina and Ontara, who had returned to their books.

"Come in here," said Madame d'Auban, leading the way to the back room, and making a sign to her husband to follow.

But he shook his head and whispered, before closing the door upon them, "Speak to him without restraint, dearest heart. He knows the truth, and will advise you."

"Oh, Maurice!" she exclaimed, sinking down on a chair, while he stood by the chimney looking at her with the tenderest pity, "it has been very dreadful. I thought I should have gone out of my mind yesterday, during those terrible hours at the Conciergerie. The expectation of being examined on that strange charge, not knowing what I could answer, and knowing no one to consult."

"But how on earth came you to be released, dearest princess, before the arrival of the king's order, which I went to Versailles to solicit?"

"Good heavens! Maurice, have you told him about me?"

"I was compelled to do so, princess. There seemed no other possible way of getting you out of prison."

"What did he say?"

"I will tell you presently," said the count, feeling some embarrassment in entering on that question. "But how were you released?"

There was some slight noise on the stairs which made Madame d'Auban start.

"I am afraid of every thing," she said, "since yesterday—each time I hear a step, or the door opens, I tremble. There is one other person besides you who knows about me, and I conclude it was through his means we were set at liberty. This note was given to me when I left the prison."

She took a note out of her bag, and gave it to the count to read.

"Ah!" he said, glancing at the signature, "Alexander Levacheff! I thought as much. A short while ago—since I saw you in the Tuileries, princess—I purposely spoke to him one day of my early acquaintance with your royal highness, and in his manner I saw something which made me suspect he knew the truth."

"He saw me in America many years ago, and recognized me. I obtained from him an oath of secresy. Read what he says"—

"MADAME,—Bound by the promise you extorted from me, I dare not rush to your feet to offer you my services. It was but a few days ago that I ascertained you were in Paris. I only arrived here myself a month ago. Imagine my feelings when I was informed of your arrest. I had been absent for a few days, and accidentally heard it spoken of in our Chancellerie. The blood froze in my veins. You! Princess! consigned to a prison! You, the associate of low-born and guilty wretches! You accused and persecuted! and by whom? By those who might once, but for untoward events, have been your subjects! By the representative of your own sister-in-law! Madame, I did not betray your secret; but, to stop those infamous proceedings, I hinted to Prince Kourakin that there was a mystery in this affair which he would

do well to respect, for it could not be solved without dangerous disclosures. He took fright, God be praised, and withdrew the charge. Do not let it be a source of uneasiness to your royal highness, but rather of comfort—that there is in this town one heart that owns allegiance to you—one man who would fain proclaim before the world, if permitted to do so, the sentiments he cherishes for the most perfect of women and the noblest of princesses.

"ALEXANDER LEVACHEFF."

"You see, Maurice," said Madame d'Auban, "that my existence would soon become known if I remained in Europe. I wish to leave Paris as soon as possible."

"This, of course, must depend, princess, on the views you have as to the future. The king is mightily interested by your story, and bent, I perceive, on bringing about your restoration to your rank and family. A messenger is already gone to the Queen of Hungary, bearing a letter from his majesty, in which he informs her of your royal highness's existence and return to Europe. His Majesty has also ordered that an apartment be prepared for you at the palace of Fontainebleau, whither, I believe, it is his wish you should forthwith remove, and where he intends himself secretly to pay you his respects. Not that I am authorized to say so, or to convey any direct message to your royal highness."

Madame d'Auban coloured deeply, and said, "And my husband and my child?"

"Ah! there is the difficulty. The king would provide for them in the most ample and generous manner on condition that your royal highness consented to separate from them."

"To separate myself from them," she slowly repeated. "To give *them* up, and oh, good God! for what? No,"

she said, starting up, with a vehemence which astonished the Comte de Saxe in that gentle creature, whose voice and eyes were sweetness itself. "No, you do not say—you do not mean that the king said that. You would not dare to repeat such words to a wife! a mother! a princess! I have gone through much and terrible suffering. By a royal husband and by the savages of the New World I have been treated as a slave. I have looked death in the face in the palace and at the stake. I have drunk the cup of humiliation to the dregs, and but yesterday was consigned to a felon's cell; but there is one trial, Maurice, which I think a merciful God will spare me. He will not suffer the great ones of the earth to lay again their iron hands on my heart, to tread under foot its strongest affections, and insult me with such an offer as the horrible one you have just mentioned. No, let me depart in peace, and ask nothing at their hands. For one moment, when you said the king knew my history, a thought crossed me—a sort of yearning wish to see once more those kindred faces, to hear the sound of voices whose tones have often haunted me; but no, there are no ties, no sympathy between us now. I am nothing to them but a name they will deem I have disgraced. I died in the palace where my young life was blighted. Let them think of me as buried in the same grave as my forsaken boy. Go and tell the King of France that Charlotte of Brunswick is no more. That the woman you spoke of yesterday is the wife of a poor gentleman, and owns no name but his."

"Be calm, dearest princess, be calm," cried the count, himself much agitated.

"Calm! when you spoke of giving them up," she said, pointing to the next room.

"But I did not advise you to do so,

princess. If you do not desire to return to your relatives—"

"My relatives! Ah! when they married me to the Czarowitch they parted from me for ever. Why should the ghost of my former self haunt their palaces again?"

"I feel sure," said the count, "that when the king understands your feelings and wishes, he will not place you under any restraint, or compel you to part with your husband."

A deadly paleness spread over Madame d'Auban's face. The words of the count, which were meant to reassure her, in her excited state of mind awoke her fears. She remained a moment silent, and then said with an unnatural calmness, "I have been foolishly agitated, M. de Saxe. Important decisions need to be maturely weighed. No one ought to trust to their first impressions. Will you convey to the king my humble thanks for his majesty's kindness, and say that I commend myself to his clemency, and crave permission not to avail myself, at present at least, of his majesty's gracious permission to reside in one of his royal palaces. Or stay: as you were not charged with any direct message to me from the king, let it be supposed, M. de Saxe, that no communication has been made to me—no intimation given of his majesty's gracious intentions. I need repose after the emotions and fatigues of yesterday, and I would rather not see even you, M. de Saxe, for a little while—"

"Certainly, princess, I will not intrude upon you again till you wish it. But you will permit me to send tomorrow to inquire after your health?"

She bowed her head and said—"You have been very kind to me and mine, M. de Saxe, from my heart I thank you."

The count saw that utterance was failing her. He respectfully kissed her hand and withdrew. As he passed through the front room he took a

friendly leave of d'Auban and Mina, and in the afternoon went to Versailles to inform the king of the spontaneous abandonment of the charge against the princess, and the particulars of his interview with her.

The instant the door had closed upon him, Madame d'Auban called her husband into her room, and, laying her icy cold hand on his, said—

"Henri, we must go away at once. The king knows all, and he has spoken of our parting. I am terrified, Henri; I will not stay another day in Paris."

"Not half a day, if possible, my own love. But surely the king would not, could not force you against your will to part from me."

"Henri, there are such things as *lettres de cachet*. There are also gilded dungeons, where, under pretence of doing honour to a guest, a woman may be doomed to endless misery. He wanted me to go to Fontainebleau—without you, without Mina. I should have been taken there at once from the prison if we had not been released before the royal order arrived. I am frightened, Henri. I cannot help thinking of the English princess Arabella Stuart, and of the Duc de Lauzun sent to Pignerol for aspiring to the hand of the Grande Mademoiselle?"

"No, not altogether for that reason, dearest. But tell me, have you confidence in the Comte de Saxe?"

"He means well; but I trust no one. Let me leave Paris."

D'Auban saw that his wife's nerves had given way under the pressure they had undergone, and that nothing but an immediate departure would calm her. He did not himself feel any of the alarm she was seized with. It seemed to him evident, indeed, that she would have to choose between him and her child and the notice of royalty and the reestablishment of her position in the eyes of the world. Still, both

for the sake of her tranquillity and as a measure of prudence, he deemed it best to acquiesce in her desire, and for them to withdraw at once from the smiles or the frowns of royalty. He reflected for an instant, and then said :—

"I am of opinion, my best love, that you and Mina should start at once for the Chateau de la Croix. My old friend has begged us most urgently to pay him a visit before we leave France; he has set his heart on seeing Mina. If I write by the next messenger, he will receive my letter in time to prepare for your arrival. Nobody here will know where you are gone. I will follow you as soon as I have finished some absolutely necessary arrangements, and we can sail from Marseilles to the Isle de Bourbon. As soon as you are gone I will give up these lodgings and leave no direction. If you will pack up a few things for your journey, dearest, I will take you to the Convent des Anglaises, where you can stay till I have ascertained the hour when the Lyons diligence starts. In three days I hope you will be in the old castle in the Forez, where nobody will dream of looking for you, my pale, sweet love."

Saying this, he pressed his wife to his heart. She tenderly returned his caresses, and said :

"Oh ! how much more freely shall I breathe when I have left Paris behind, and still more when the waves are rolling between France and us. I begin to feel that I have been foolish, Henri. The king has no interest in forcing me back into my former position, and if he had, he is not a wicked tyrant, like the English Queen Elizabeth. God help him ; perhaps, when he made the suggestion that almost drove me out of my senses, he thought he was doing me a kindness. Of course, his power, or that of my relatives, could reach us in Bourbon as well as here ; but when they find we desire nothing

at their hands—that we only wish to be forgotten, they will not renew offers which are a pain and an insult. But will you wait till you get the promised appointment, Henri?”

This was said with an anxiety which made him answer at once:

“No, dearest, I have letters to the Governor of Bourbon which will, I hope, secure my obtaining some small post in the island. At all events, we can live cheaper at St. Denys than at Paris,” he added, with a smile, as he saw her face brightening up with the prospect of a speedy departure. “Poor Mina,” she said, “how grieved she will be to part with Ontara, and so suddenly, too. Will you break it to the poor child?”

D'Auban went into the room where his daughter and her adopted brother were reading together. He laid his hand on her shoulder and called her away.

“My Mina,” he said, folding his arms around her, “you were a courageous little girl when you went to look for the Comte de Saxe, and now you must show another kind of courage.”

She looked up in his face and smiled, but he felt that a thrill ran through her slight frame.

“For reasons you cannot as yet understand, your mother cannot remain here any longer. She must leave this house in an hour, and Paris this evening. Antoine will go with you.”

“Not you, papa?”

“I shall join you in a few days, and then we shall all leave France.”

The child smiled again, and though tears stood in her eyes she resolutely forced them back, and kissed her father without speaking a word. He beckoned to Ontara.

“My dear son,” he said, as he made him sit down by their side. “Strange and sudden events compel us to depart at once from my native land. There is

no abiding place for us in this world, Ontara. We are wanderers, like you, on the face of the earth; but the day will come, please God, when we shall meet again in a home of our own.”

“May not Ontara say to you, the white chief he loves as a father, what the daughter of Moab said to her dead husband's mother?—‘Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee. May not your people be his people, even as your God has become his God?’”

“No, dear youth,” d'Auban answered, “it may not be so now. Your duty is to stay for the present with your kind protector M. Maret, and to continue the studies which will enable you to pursue whatever path in life Providence may mark out for you. But wherever we have a home that home will be yours, dear Ontara, and under a foreign sky, and in scenes equally new to us all, we shall, I trust, meet again in a very few years. And now, my children, I must leave you, for there is much to be done ere I return. My Mina, you and your mother will be gone from this house, but I shall see you in the afternoon at the Convent des Anglaises.”

Ontara did not speak at first. He was like a person stunned by a sudden blow. Mina had stood him in stead of country, and kindred, and friends; he seemed to have concentrated upon her all the feelings of which his heart was capable, and young as she was she fully understood their strength and depth, and returned his affection with a love which was made up of gratitude, enthusiasm, pity and admiration. In him she saw the representative of the North Indian race, and of the land where they had both been born. She had not shed a tear in her father's sight but now she wept bitterly. He gave no outward signs of grief, but, in a grave tone of voice and a fixed earnest gaze, he said:

"When we parted in the forest on that dark night when I gave you back to your father, you made me a promise, Wenonah; will you renew it now?"

"Yes, I will, Ontara. Unless I am compelled to it, I will never marry a white man. I will never marry at all."

"Nay, but will you be my wife? The rainbow of my life; the day-star of my dark sky? The Rachel for whom I will work for seven years, if need be, oh, daughter of the white man."

"No, my brother, that can never be. The daughters of white men, every one says so, do not marry their Indian brethren. They may love them as I do; they may be willing to die for them as I would for you and for your people, Ontara; but white fathers and mothers will not let them be your wives, and I do not wish to be a wife. I wish to be your sister."

"And will you then always be my sister? and when I come to the home your father speaks of, shall we finish the book we have been reading?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Mina, holding out her hand for the volume. "See, I turn down the page where we left off." It was the life of Father Claver, the apostle of the negroes.

"I bought a copy of it this morning; here it is, will you write something in it?"

She took up a pen, and with an un-

steady hand she wrote, "Go and do thou likewise."

"There," she said, "when we parted in the forest we did not think we should meet again in a great room full of fine people; and perhaps some years hence we shall see each other again in some place we do not know of now."

"My child, the coach is waiting," said her mother, who was counting the minutes in her eagerness to be gone. Mina hastily placed her few possessions in a straw basket Ontara had made for her. He had learnt the art from a Canadian *coursur des bois*. Madame d'Aubun took an affectionate leave of the young Indian. Mina could not speak, her heart was too full. As the carriage rolled off she saw him watching them down the long narrow streets, even as he had once before watched her down the green vista of the moonlit grove, and she turned round to her mother, and said:

"Mamma, is life as full of changes for every one as it is for us?"

"No, my child," was the answer, "the destinies of men are as various as their faces. It seems to be God's will that we should have no abiding home on earth. What must we say, love?"

"His will be done," answered the child, laying her head on her mother's bosom: "but, mother, I think the best name for heaven is, 'the place where there are no partings.'"

CHAPTER VIII.

With delicate hand and open brow
 Like Parian marble fair,
 Know ye him not? 'Tis Tracy de Vere,
 The baron's beautiful heir.

'Tis Tracy de Vere, the castle's pride,
 The rich, the nobly born,
 Pacing along the sunlit sod,
 With the step of a playful fawn.

There's a halcyon smile spread o'er his face
 Shedding a bright and radiant grace;
 There's a sweetness of sound in his laughing tones,
 Betraying the gentle spirit he owns.

He teaches her how to note the hours
 By where the sunbeams rest;
 He wades for her where the virgin flowers
 Gracefully bend 'neath the cascade's showers,
 To pluck the whitest and best.

He tells her the curious legends of old
 Known by each mountaineer;
 He tells her stories of ghost and fay,
 Waking her wonder and fear. *Eliza Cook.*

Then pray for a soul in peril,
 A soul for which Jesus died;
 Ask by the cross that bore him,
 And by her who stood beside.
 And the angels of God will thank you,
 And bend from their throne of light,
 To tell you that Heaven rejoices
 At the deed *you have* done to-night,
Adelaide Proctor.

THERE had been a long-standing traditionary friendship, and more than one intermarriage, between the family of the de la Croix's and that of Henri d'Auban. In the preceding century the heads of both families had been zealous partisans of the League, and had fought side by side under the command of Guise and Joyeuse. D'Auban's grandfather had made considerable pecuniary sacrifices to ransom from captivity the father of the present Baron de la Croix; and when peace was made and the fortunes of his friend reestablished, he would never

consent to be reimbursed. The memory of this debt of gratitude had been bequeathed by old Pierre de la Croix to his son as a sacred legacy. And though the meetings between the present representatives of these two families had been few and far between, when they did take place nothing could exceed the friendliness and cordiality of their relations. Baron Charles was an excellent man, and a kind one, too, notwithstanding a certain abruptness of tone, which betokened a more habitual intercourse with inferiors and dependents than

with his equals. He had not what was then called "l'air de la cour." But in his manner to women there was a courtesousness which savoured of the days of chivalry. Since he had been made Provost of the Forez, a slight pomposity of language and demeanour marked the good old man's sense of his exalted position and arduous responsibility. His defects were skin deep, not so his virtues. M. de Maître used to say, "Grattez le Russe, vous trouverez le Tartare." It might have been said of the baron, "Grattez le tyran, vous trouverez le père;" for, whilst he rated his tenants in the blustering fashion he had learnt as a youth in camps, and apparently governed his family in a despotic manner, it was generally supposed that not only his submissive-looking wife, the picture of a chatelaine of the seventeenth century, and his handsome daughter-in-law, the widow of his only son, could do with him what they liked; but that his daughters, the twin sisters, merry pretty Bertha and the grave and sedate Isaure, turned him round their slender fingers with very little difficulty. As to M. le Chevalier, who, had he not turned round his fingers in that old castle since the day that five weeks after his father had been killed at the siege of Luneville, he opened his eyes on a world which as yet had not proved to him one of trouble. This young gentleman was eighteen years of age, and had never known a greater sorrow than leaving home for the college where he had just finished his studies; or the loss of a favourite pointer which had died a few days before that on which he rode out with his grandfather and some of their tenants to meet Madame and Mademoiselle d'Auban, who were to arrive at the neighbouring town of Montbrison in the course of the afternoon. The woods of the Forez had been lately infested with robbers,

forming part of Mandrin's famous gang, and the baron deemed it prudent to send his carriage and four to meet the travellers, and to escort them himself on their way to the castle, a distance of about fifteen miles. The Chevalier Raoul was delighted at the prospect of visitors. A more light-hearted young gentilhomme could not easily have been found in the light-hearted land of France; his black eyes had an expression of good-humoured espièglerie, and his laugh an irresistibly contagious merriment which bewitched old and young.

As he made his horse curvet and plunge in the entrance court whilst the detachment was getting under weigh, his sisters stood at the window kissing their hands, and Bertha said to Isaure:

"How carefully Raoul has powdered his hair to-day; and he has put on his most becoming coat, sister. I suspect grandpapa has let the cat out of the bag."

"What cat and what bag?" asked Isaure, who had her wits less about her than her twin sister.

"If you have not guessed I will not tell you, my sweet Isaure. I believe that when M. le Curé publishes the banns of marriage between Isaure de la Croix and Roger d'Estourville, you will ask in that same dreamy manner, 'Who is it that is to be married come next Midsummer?'"

"Giddy girl," said Isaure, blushing and laughing. "No fear that everybody will not know in and round the castle when your wedding is at hand. Ah me! was there ever such a wagging tongue or so blithe a heart as yours. You and Raoul ought to have been born on the same day—not you and I, sister."

"There they go," cried Bertha, as the cavalcade went out at the porter's gate. "Grandpapa is never so pleased as when he has an excuse for calling

out his bodyguard; and M. le Chevalier will not be sorry to show off that gray steed in the eyes of the ladies."

"Come into the parterre, Isaure. We will gather an immense bouquet of roses for the guest chamber, and lavender and rosemary to scent the drawers."

"How I wish it was autumn, that we might fill the grape baskets for the bedroom tables."

"It is like you, Isaure, to like autumn better than spring, and fruit than flowers."

"We might get a few early strawberries, perhaps, which, in a corbeille with green moss, would look pretty."

"I have a mind to make a wreath of violets like the one you wore at Marianne's wedding last week, and put it on the low toilet table."

"Does not mamma want you in the store-room?"

"No, she and grandmamma are there as busy as two bees. They say they do not want a buzzing-fly like me."

"Well, go and get your violets, and I will to the strawberry-bed, and take all the ripe ones in spite of gardener grand Louis's cross looks."

"But do not before your task is half done, pull a book out of your pocket, and sit down like an idle girl in the orchard. Ever since Roger called you Clémence Isaure you are never without a book in your hand. And I do not feel sure that you do not write verses."

"Fie Bertha, how can you say such a thing?"

"Well, I would if I could. It's a sort of singing."

And one sister went in search of flowers, and carolling like a bird, and the other knelt beside the strawberry-bed, filling her basket and repeating the while in a low voice lines which she had made the day her parents told her she was to marry Roger d'Estourville, with whom she had once danced a minuet, and who had picked up a

rose she had dropped, as he led her back to her seat. In those olden times many a little romance was mixed up with the formalities of marriages of *convenance*, as they were called in France, and a young girl was sometimes agreeably surprised by the order to accept as a husband one whom she had timidly loved from her childhood, or had fallen in love with at first sight, during a brief interview under the eyes of her parents. It does not seem clear when we study their lives that women loved their husbands less or were less loved by them in the days of Lady Russell, Lady Derwentwater, Lady Nithsdale, Madame de Montmorency, or Madame La Roche Jacquelin, than in our own.

The baron and his son had been for some time standing under the shade of the plane trees, in the promenade at Montbrison, when the Paris diligence arrived in sight. As it stopped at the door of the inn, M. de la Croix went to the carriage-door to greet Madame d'Auban and her daughter. He informed her in a set speech that he had considered it a duty as well as a pleasure to offer her the protection of his escort from Montbrison to his chateau, the roads and woods having been lately infested by robbers, although it was to be hoped that the measures he had taken, as Provost of the Forez, had dispersed the gang and ensured public safety. He then conducted her to his carriage and four, which was drawn up on the other side of the place, and calling his grandson, he said, 'Permit me to introduce to you the chevalier Raoul de la Croix.' The chevalier's black eyes met Mina's blue orbs; if ever a youth of eighteen fell in love at first sight with a girl of thirteen, the baron's grandson did so on that sunny afternoon in June under the plane trees of Montbrison, as he handed into his grandfather's carriage. Mademoiselle

Wilhelmina d'Auban. He mounted his gray horse and rode on one side of the stately old coach, the baron on the other, and their retainers before and behind it. A pleasant change it was for travellers weary of the high road, its noise, and its dust, to be rolling along the green natural avenues of a forest, resting on soft cushions, with no noise in their ears but the light tramp of the horses' feet, and no glare to hurt their eyes now that the noonday rays were shining through the branches of the overarching trees.

Madame d'Auban felt carried back to the days of her youth. She could fancy herself emerging from the gates of the palace at Wolfenbittel, and driving through the green woods of its domain. She thought of the other Wilhelmina who had then sat by her side, and had a little difficulty in attending to the baron as he rode and talked with her at the carriage-window. Mina was delighted at the novelty of the scene. The sound of the postilions' horns, the rapid motion, the horses and the riders, the vistas of woodland scenery—the graceful gambols of two large dogs who formed part of the cortège, pleased and amused the little girl, who had been so long amidst painful or uncongenial scenes. Once as a fine extent of country opened to view, the chevalier pointed to it with his whip, and bent forward his head to see if she had taken notice of it. She smiled, and from that moment he found many opportunities of directing her attention to objects of interest on the road; sometimes to a deer bounding across the glade, or to a group of children gathering wild flowers on a bank, or to a flight of birds careering across the sky. When there was nothing else to show, he showed off a little himself, and with a sidelong glance took notice of the admiring look she gave to the prancing gray, who chafed

the bit and speckled his mane with foam with admirable docility to his rider's desires.

At last they came in sight of the château de la Croix, an old stately residence, half fortress, and half palace. Part of it had fallen in ruins and was covered with ivy and gray lichens. The walls which surrounded it, and the gateway at the entrance were crowned with a fringe of larkspurs and gillyflowers; and a little trickling stream edged with blue forget-me-nots, and teeming with water-cresses, flowed through the moat which encircled it. Mina had never seen any thing the least like this before; though what she had read and pictured to herself as she read, gave her the feeling which most people have known some time or other, of recognizing in a new scene the visible image of a long familiar dream. Has not the view of the Roman Campagna from the steps of St. John of Lateran or the Garden of the Villa Mattei answered, in a startling manner, to the visions which have haunted the minds of many to whom Rome is an object of artistic worship, if not of religious veneration? When the coach drove up to the bottom of the winding staircase leading to the suite of apartments inhabited by the family, Madame de la Croix and her daughter-in-law came half way down the steps to greet their visitors. Bertha and Isaure were occupied in restraining the dogs, who wished to give them an equally cordial, but more troublesome, welcome. But their bright eyes spake the words, and when they all met in the principal salon the girls embraced Mina, and then quite astonished at her height wondered if she could be only thirteen years old. She was as tall as themselves—as tall as Isaure, who was going to be married in a few weeks. They were more like pretty fairies, these twin sisters, than grown-up women. Raoul, who was a year

younger, had always taken upon himself the airs of an elder brother. Madame de la Croix was an imposing-looking person, whose regular features and serene countenance retained their beauty in old age. She was formal in manner, but very kind. There were traces of sorrow in her face, of a quiet, long-accepted, softened grief. Between her and Madame Armand de la Croix, the mother of Raoul and his sisters, there was an affection which made the old curé call them Naomi and Ruth. During eighteen years they had clung to each other as they had done on the day when the Maréchal de Villar's letter had fallen as a thunderbolt on their two hearts. "Long live France, and long live the king," he had written. "The Baron Armand de la Croix has died as a hero, with the enemy's colours in his hand." They had suffered together, and strengthened each other's purpose not to let the shadow of their grief fall on the sunshiny lives of the three young creatures playing and laughing at their feet, and the declining years of the Baron who concentrated on these children all the love of a nature more fitted for joy than for sorrow. And so it was a happy home, in spite of one great grief shrouded in the sanctuary of an undying love. And that happiness was contagious. The old-fashioned simplicity of manners, the reverential manner of the children towards the parents, the patriarchal relations between the masters and the servants, the tenants and their lord—the simple, pious customs of the peasantry, and the inexhaustible charity of the two mothers as they were fondly called in and round the castle, formed an atmosphere of peace and joy which insensibly influenced all within its sphere. It told also on Mina—

The young slight girl, the fawn-like child,
Of green savannahs and the leafy wild,
Yet one who knew how early tears are shed.

It brought back childhood and its sweet merriment to her over-wrought heart. It chased away what was too keen and too bitter in the memories of the last years. It soothed the grief of her late parting with her Indian brother, and substituted other thoughts for her long, solitary musings on the mystery which she dimly discerned in the lives of her parents. But at first there was a little formality in her intercourse with the young de la Croixs. Isaure and Bertha, and even Raoul, were more reserved than the young people she had lately known in Paris. Dinner was served soon after the arrival of the strangers, and Raoul supplied every possible and impossible want of hers with watchful assiduity; but though on the most affectionate footing with their parents, the old-fashioned etiquette was preserved in this family, and the son and daughters maintained an almost unbroken silence whilst their elders conversed. But after dinner they went out, and then their tongues were loosened. The three girls walked up and down the terrace, and Mina asked a thousand questions about the old castle; its thick gray walls, its turrets, and its battlements filled her with astonishment. She could not believe, she said, that men had made it. Bertha laughed, and said, "Men were giants in those days"—a fact scarcely borne out by history, but which she had drawn from a volume of old romances, the only book besides her *livre d'heures* she had much read.

Isaure pointed out to Mina the dungeons of the old fortress. "There is a secret chamber beneath the tower," she said, "where Elise de Salran was murdered by her lover. Her ghost is sometimes seen on the turret stairs, and it is also said that Roger le Jaune, one of our ancestors, died of hunger in the vaults on the east side because he would not betray the king's secret."

"I should like to see *his* ghost," said Mina, earnestly. "He must have been a brave man."

"Oh, what a strange idea!" cried Bertha, "to want to see a ghost. I should not like a visit from the other world; not even from a saint, I think."

"Perhaps," said Isaure, "Mademoiselle hopes the ghost of Baron Roger would tell her the king's secret. But you would have to ask him. Ghosts never speak first, they say."

"Who are *they* who know so much of ghosts, fair Isaure?" cried a voice behind the speaker. This was Raoul, who had watched for an opportunity to join the trio. There was something catching in his laugh; both his sisters and Mina joined in it, though Isaure scolded him for startling her. A bird flew across the terrace, and Mina exclaimed:

"Oh, should you not like to be that bird?"

"Why, why, mademoiselle?" Raoul asked.

"Because he is flying over the walls."

"And are you longing to go beyond them, Mademoiselle Mina?"

"Oh, yes. The country looks so pretty."

"Then I will go and ask the three mothers—you know we have two of our own—if, under my escort and protection, the young ladies may issue forth from the castle walls and visit the environs."

He went on his errand, and Isaure said to Mina:

"Did you notice my brother's horse this morning? It is reckoned the handsomest gray in the whole province."

"Oh, yes; he has such a beautiful arched neck, and looks so spirited and so proud."

"And do you not think Raoul rides very well?" asked Bertha, in her turn.

"Yes, very well indeed. He and his

horse seem to make one, like the statues of Centaurs in the galleries at Paris."

"I think," said Bertha, "Raoul never looks so handsome as on horseback."

"He is the best brother that ever lived," said Isaure.

"If he is ever so good, he cannot be better than mine," Mina answered.

"I did not know you had one. Raoul said you were an only child."

"I have an adopted brother, an Indian."

"Oh, what a funny thing!" exclaimed Bertha, bursting out laughing, "to have a savage for a brother."

"He is not a savage," said Mina, reddening. "He is as good as any white man can be."

"But not so handsome as Raoul?"

"I don't know about that. Ontara has beautiful eyes, and a dark, clear, brown complexion."

"Oh, how frightful, dear Mina! I would not for all the world exchange brothers with you."

"Nor I with you," Mina answered, with warmth.

"No, of course not," said Bertha, laughing, "because, if Raoul was your brother, he could not be you—"

She stopped short and coloured.

"My what?" Mina asked, with a puzzled look.

"Oh, nothing, nothing. It was old Nanette put it into my head. Never mind, Isaure," she said, kissing her sister, "don't look so grave; I have not said any thing. How old are you, Mademoiselle Mina?"

"Thirteen; but please do not call me Mademoiselle. Nobody does. You know I am not French. I am an Indian girl."

"I know, a creole. Brother," she said to Raoul, who had returned with the desired permission, and was leading the way towards the castle gate, "what do you guess Mina's age to be?"

"I cannot guess, sister, because I

know," he replied, and then they all went out through the entrance-court, and conducted their guest all over the curious and picturesque ins and outs of the old fortress, which had been by degrees turned into a family residence. They visited the quaint parterres, gay with every variety of sweet-smelling and bright-coloured flowers; the bees and the doves, Isaure's pets; and Bertha's chickens; and Raoul took them to the kennel and into the stables, and showed Mina the dun pony which, if she liked, she might ride the next day, a thing she had not done since her father used to carry her with him on his own horse at St. Agathe. The walk was a pleasant one, and Mina's spirits rose apace in the society of her new friends. Their liveliness; their gay, joyous laughter, the exuberance of their youthful spirits, was unlike any thing she had yet known. It acted upon her like refreshing air or sparkling wine on an exhausted frame. Raoul was the gayest of them all. His jokes, his stories, his nonsense, the good-humoured mischievousness which played about his handsome face, the innocent malice of his dark eyes, the droll questions he put to her, his funny views of people and things amused and charmed her. There had been in her life so little of that kind of merriment. Wit, and vivacity, and keen encounters of the tongue, she had witnessed in the salon of the Hotel d'Orgeville, but none of the bubbling natural overflow of gladness which takes its source in innocent and happy hearts, which have never been in contact with the cares, the miseries, or the vices of the world. When they went through the village, the women and children were sitting out of doors, enjoying the rest of the evening hour, and smiled and curtsied as the young seigneur and his sisters went by. The peasants, returning from work, pulled off their hats and said "Good

night" in the patois of the country. From many a poor person's lips she heard a blessing invoked upon her companions, and good wishes for the young Isaure, who was soon to go forth as a bride from her ancestral home. One old woman, leaning on her staff, said to her gossip, who was watching the young people down the streets:

"Methinks the choir children may as well be practising a welcome as a farewell to a bride."

"Ah! bah! Our young lord is too young to marry. He is going on his travels first."

"Well, I saw him gathering Madeleine's roses for that blue-eyed young lady who arrived a few hours ago at the castle; and, if monsieur le chevalier is not paying his court to her, I am much mistaken. Madeleine is in the third heaven; she will get something handsome for her flowers. Look; they are going into the church. He is showing her all about the place. We shall see them, I hope, on the green next Sunday evening. M. le Baron likes to see the boys and girls at play after vespers."

"Aye, and Mademoiselle Isaure is to give a marriage portion to the best-behaved girl of the village. A little bird has whispered to me that your Jane's eldest daughter is to be the *Rosière*."

The old woman wagged her head, and laughed at her gossip's shrewd guess. The supper bell was ringing when the young people returned to the castle. It was served in a hall, where, at a long table, sat all the baron's household, as well as his family; gray-headed serving men and women, with babies on their knees; and boys and girls with bright sunny faces, looking both good and happy. Mina sat between Bertha and Isaure, and Raoul on the opposite side. He seldom took his eyes off her; and when the meal was

over he went with her and his sisters to the parapet which formed a sort of terrace overhanging the moat. There they sat on the stone bench, and made Mina describe the new world where she had lived so long—and Bertha and Raoul listened with flushed cheeks and eager eyes, and Isaure cried at the tales she told them of the revolt and the destruction of the Natches. And they all wished they could see Ontara, and would have liked to live at St. Agathe if France had not been their native land and the most beautiful country in the world. Mina fired up a little at this, and then Raoul, to appease her, said that he had certainly never seen North America, but that he would like very much to go there one day. And then she would not be outdone in civility, and admitted that, although she hated Paris, the country in France, and particularly the Forez, was very charming. Then Isaure said she must visit the old Abbey of Ste. Odile, and the Roche qui pleure, and the Shrine of our Lady of the Wood. And Bertha said she liked the Roche qui vire better than the Roche qui pleure; and a dance on the village green better than any thing else in the world, except a ball at Montbrison, the only one she had ever been to. And then she and Raoul laughed with Isaure about that ball, and explained to Mina what the joke was. And then he asked her if she would dance with him a minuet. And she said she did not know how, and he offered to teach her. And she said she was too stupid to learn—that Mademoiselle d'Orgeville's dancing-master had said so. And Raoul made a disrespectful speech about the dancing-master, and Mina laughed, and the sound of that laugh was like music in her mother's ears as she sat working at the open window by the side of Madame de la Croix, and Madame Armand played on the spinnet over

and over again the baron's favourite tunes, whilst he dozed in his great arm-chair. The stars had risen one by one in the darkening sky and the great clock of the castle struck nine. Then the laughter was hushed, and the spinnet shut up, and after night prayers had been said, every soul in the house withdrew to rest.

Mina sat a while on her mother's lap, great tall girl as she was, and rested her head on her shoulder, before the shutters were closed in their bed chamber. The perfume of the jessamine which covered the mullioned windows was filling it with fragrance. The moon was shining on the red-brick floor, and throwing changeful lights on the tapestried walls.

"Don't you think this a very nice charming place, mamma? and our friends, don't you like them very much?"

"Ah!" said her mother, stroking her cheek, "my Mina has found out at last, has she, that white people can be pleasant?"

"Yes, they are very pleasant, and so kind to me. Isaure told me a beautiful story about the fair-haired Ermen-garde and her daughter, who was called, like her, Isaure—and then M. Raoul said there was another Isaure, who wrote verses, and was crowned at Toulouse some hundred years ago. He laughed about ladies writing verses. I did not tell him, and have never told anybody but you, mamma, that I write verses sometimes."

"But as you will never sing them before great crowds, or be crowned like Clémence Isaure," answered her mother, laughing, "there is no harm in it."

"No, but I had rather M. Raoul did not know."

"Don't be afraid; I will not tell him."

"Mamma, to-morrow I am to ride the dun pony, and to see so many in

teresting things. I hope it will be fine. And in the afternoon we are to fish in that pretty little stream that runs through the moat. Have you been to the church, mother? Oh, it is such a beautiful, grand old church, with banners in it and shield, and the tomb of a crusader, of a Baron de la Croix, who went to the Holy Land with Godfrey de Bouillon. M. Raoul says he took leave of his wife at the church door after they had said a prayer together before the altar. Mamma, when he said that, he asked me if I would kneel down by his side, at the same place, and say a prayer that what he wished might happen. I asked if it was a good thing he wished, and he said, Yes. So I did what he asked. When we left the church he said—'Papa and mamma were married at that altar. I have never seen my father—he died before I was born.' That was the only time he spoke gravely, for he does nothing but laugh, and say such funny things that he makes me laugh too. Will you look at the crusader's tomb to-morrow? and please call me early, dearest mamma, for we are to ride before it gets hot, Bertha says, and whilst the dew is on the grass."

Madame d'Auban tenderly pressed her lips on her daughter's cheek. Mina went to bed, and was soon fast asleep. But Madame d'Auban lay awake, thinking of German castles and haunted chambers and of palaces, enclosing, even as in living graves, warm and loving hearts. And she mused on her child's destiny—her lovely, gifted child, doomed to share her parents' strange and unsettled existence. It was long before she closed her eyes. But in the morning she was sleeping heavily, when Mina bounded down the steps leading to one of the entrances of the parish church, which stood between the court of the castle and the village.

The ride proved a delightful one to

the new friends. The dun pony had carried Bertha and Isaure for many years. It was as gentle a palfrey as lady ever rode. Raoul, mounted on his fiery gray, headed the cavalcade, which went winding down the hill, and across the fields into the woods. He was in the highest spirits, in spite of the baron having insisted on an old *piqueur* escorting the party, in case of accidents—a precaution which he had deemed a reflection on his own prudence. But his good-humoured resentment, and his outbreaks of indignation at Jacques Ferrand's remonstrances on one or two occasions, when the roads were getting bad, and M. le Chevalier was pushing on too fast for the ladies and the horses—"only too fast for M. Jacques's own comfort," as Raoul whispered to Mina—only heightened the excitement and enjoyment which at that age derives its source from the overflowing joyousness of youthful hearts. They rode through shady nooks, soft green valleys, and smiling villages. They drew up at the top of a hill, to look at the view of Montbrison and of Moulins in the distance—the spire of its cathedral rising against the deep blue sky. They dismounted to explore the ruins of the abbey in the wood, and said a Hail Mary at the shrine, which was a favourite place of pilgrimage throughout the neighbourhood. They drank of the water of la Roche qui pleure, and breakfasted on milk and bread and strawberries from a neighbouring farm. The sun was getting high up in the horizon as they returned, skirting the wood just within the shade, alongside fields of waving corn, just ripening for the sickle, and edged by the fringe of scarlet, blue, and purple flowers which modern improvements are gradually banishing from the land.

Mina noticed the healthy, happy looks of the French peasantry, so different from the aspect of the Indians and

"the slaves of the western hemispheres. Raoul asked her, as they were drawing near home, if she would not like always to live in France. "No," she said, "not always;" and then looked a little thoughtful, and would not say where she wished to live. There was now, even as there always had been, a singular mixture in Mina of what was not so much childish as childlike; and of thoughts and feelings matured beyond her age. When, in the afternoon, she sat by the trout stream, speaking under her breath, for fear of frightening away the fishes, and laughing, till she almost cried, at Bertha's losing her temper with them, she seemed, except for her height, perhaps, even younger than she was; but if any one could have read the thoughts which Raoul's question had awakened, or known what subjects were often occupying her mind, it would have been a matter of astonishment that one so young should be so deep a thinker, or capable, in an emergency, of a woman's patience and energy. Days of brilliant sunshine, of country air, and of intercourse with her new friends, wonderfully improved her health. Her mother watched with delight the elasticity of her step and the brightness of her countenance. Everybody in the castle was delighted with the little creole; and as to the chevalier, if he had fallen in love with her at first sight, every hour seemed to add to the intensity of his boyish passion. Finding out that she was fond of books, he proposed one wet morning to his sisters to take their work into the library. Isaure gladly consented. Roger's speech about Clémence Isaure had awakened a literary enthusiasm which had not yet subsided.

The library contained as many cases of stuffed birds and collections of insects as books; but there was a curious set of old romaunts of the days of the troubadours and the gay "savoir," and

some volumes of tales of chivalry, which Raoul had read over and over again during his boyhood. He proposed to amuse the ladies, whilst they worked, with the history of *Amadis de Gaule*, and Mina listened with the deepest attention to the knight-errant's adventures. Raoul was satisfied with her attention, but not with her admiration.

"Mademoiselle Mina, would you not have liked to live in those days?" he asked.

"But I don't think there ever were such days," she answered. This was a view of the subject he was not prepared to admit.

"You don't think there were knights-errant and tournaments, and ladies in whose honour the knights broke lances and performed prodigies of valour?"

"Oh, yes, but not enchanters and giants, such as Prince *Amadis* met with."

"Then you don't like this story, Mademoiselle Mina?"

"Not so much as real ones, like that of Joan of Arc, for instance."

"Ah! that is one of the few amusing bits of history. Battles are always good fun. I got a prize for writing verses on the battle of Fontenoy. But real, downright histories are very stupid. Do not you hate every thing about laws, commerce, art, and agriculture?"

"Yes, in a great history book," answered Mina, laughing; "but I like pictures and cornfields, and I should like a law that would prevent people from buying and selling other men. I like people who do some good."

"The knights-errant used to defend the helpless, and punish their oppressors."

"Then I should like them."

"And you would like Raoul," whispered Bertha in Mina's ear; "he is so good to the poor and to little children,

even though he laughs if anybody says so, or takes notice of it."

"No secrets, Mdle. Bertha," cried her brother. "In mamma's book on Politeness, which I had to read a chapter of, as a penance, when I had transgressed any of its rules, it is said that whispering in company is forbidden."

"I was telling Mina bad things of you."

"Mademoiselle, slandering is a great sin; I hope M. le Curé will not give you absolution for a twelvemonth."

"That is very possible, brother, for I am not at all disposed to retract what I have said."

The sittings in the library led to more talking than reading. The hours went by very fast, and the days also. Poor Raoul began to dread M. d'Auban's arrival as the greatest misfortune, for he knew it would be speedily followed by the departure of the *Dame des pensées*. All sorts of schemes were in his mind, and he had long conversations with his mother; and his spirits rose very much (not that they had at any time much fallen) after an interview he had had with the baron on the fourth day of Mdle. d'Auban's visit.

The evening of that day proved very wet. The morning, according to Wordsworth's lines, "had gone forth deceitfully, clad in radiant vest;" but dark clouds, and the distant rolling of thunder, and a first few heavy drops, had driven the young people home some time before the accustomed hour. After supper there was rain, with thunder and lightning. The ladies drew round a table in the centre of the room, and worked.

"This is just an evening for ghost stories," said Bertha, who was always the first to propose this kind of amusement, though as she hastened to declare it made her blood run cold, and her hair stand on end, when her grandpapa told of the man at Moulins who

had spent a night in the churchyard, and had seen three different spectres, the one more awful than the other. This sort of conversation, when once set going, is easily carried on. They were long-standing stories of apparitions which the baron related with great effect, and Madame de la Croix had known a lady who had seen a ghost with her own eyes. And Raoul had heard at college a strange tale of three men travelling in a diligence, who were joined by three others, that looked like their own spectres, and did every thing that they did, except that they never eat at the inns; but they always slipped into their beds before they could get in themselves, only when one of the travellers had the courage to lie down as if there was nobody beside him, he found the ghost did not take up any room, and he slept very comfortably. But the next day the three spectres were in the coach again, and

"Good heavens how pale you look, my dear, you are as white as a sheet," exclaimed Madame Armand, who was sitting opposite to Mina.

"Hush, Raoul, she is frightened with these dreadful stories."

All eyes were turned on Mina. Her face was quite colourless, and she seemed ready to faint.

"It is nothing, only such an odd fancy, mamma," she said to Madame d'Auban, who had taken her hand and found it cold and trembling.

"You used not to be frightened at these sort of tales when you were a very little girl, Mina, darling, but I suppose—"

"It was not the stories, mamma, only such an odd fancy."

"Did you think you saw any thing?" said her young friends, eagerly.

"You'd better not talk to her about it," said Madame d'Auban, who saw she was turning pale again.

"Come," said Madame Armand, "I will play a rondo, and you shall dance and drive the ghosts away."

She did so, and Mina joined hands with the rest, and the colour returned to her cheeks, and she sang the *Ritournelle* with the others; but her mother observed that now and then she glanced timidly towards the windows.

"For my part," said Madame de la Croix, in reply to some observation of her husband's, "I am not half as much afraid of ghosts as of robbers. I had much rather hear of a spectre in the neighbourhood, than of Mandrin and his band."

"My dear," said the baron, "you need not entertain the slightest apprehension on that subject. Since I have been appointed Provost of the Forez, I have taken effectual measures on the subject, and have twice reviewed the rural force. You need not pretend to be an *esprit fort*. I am sure you would die of terror at the sight of a ghost."

"How gracefully Mina dances," said Madame Armand to Madame d'Auban. "She is as light as a fairy. Oh, now, she and Raoul are going to practise the *Menuet de la Cour*, dear madame. Well, I think you and I may, without foolish vanity, just between ourselves, agree that prettier partners were never seen than my black-eyed chevalier and your blue-eyed daughter."

They did look to great advantage during that dancing lesson. Mina was taking pains to learn the graceful steps of the minuet, and smiled so prettily as half-way across the room she stopped to curtsy to her partner, that Raoul forgot to make his own obeisance, and clapped his hands. She stopped short, and laughing, exclaimed, "that is not fair." Then both his sisters scolded him, and Madame Armand played the rondo again, and they danced till they were tired.

"Are you sure, my child, that you are

not ill?" Madame d'Auban asked her daughter when she and herself had withdrawn to their bedchamber.

"I am quite well, dearest mamma."

"Then were you frightened with the ghost stories?"

"No; I did not mind them."

"But then, Mina, love, I want to know what made you turn so pale in the middle of Raoul's ridiculous story."

"Mamma, it is better not to speak of foolish fancies. I am sure it was all imagination."

"I don't think it is the best way to get rid of a fear or a fancy to keep it to oneself. We can often drive away troublesome thoughts by telling them."

"Mamma, I assure you I don't believe in ghosts and apparitions. But I suppose people see things sometimes, and that it is all a mistake."

Madame d'Auban felt uneasy. She had a lurking belief in apparitions.

"For heaven's sake, Mina, what did you see?"

"Well, mamma, I was looking straight at the windows of the parlour—the one which opens on to the parapet—when there came a flash of lightning, and I saw, as distinctly as possible it seemed to me, a face looking into the room, and it was at the moment at least, I felt sure it was Osseo's face."

"The Indian Osseo," repeated her mother, apparently relieved. "O, my darling, I have no doubt then, it was an ocular delusion. I have often felt as if I saw about my bed some of these terrible dark Natches' faces. They quite haunted me at one time."

"I had never thought so little about America as since we have been staying here. I was listening to M. Raoul, and wondering about his travellers and their ghosts. Then all at once I saw what I thought was Osseo's face; but it is such a brief glimpse of any thing a flash of lightning gives."

"You did not hear any thing about that Osseo before leaving Paris?"

"No, mamma, Ontara did not know where he was. He ran away, you remember, the day they landed at Marseilles."

"Your mind has dwelt so much upon Indians, my Mina, that it is not wonderful you should see them in imagination."

"Yes, I suppose it was a mistake," Mina repeated, and nothing more passed between her mother and herself on that subject.

The next morning, when the family were assembled at breakfast, the baron announced with exultation that he had received excellent news of the success of the rural gendarmerie, in an encounter with a troop of Mandrin's gang in the Forest of Ludres. Several of them had been taken prisoners, and safely lodged in the prison at Moulins. Mandrin himself had narrowly escaped being arrested. It was supposed he must be concealed in some cave or pit in the same neighbourhood.

"Have they caught, sir," Raoul asked, "that incarnate devil, they call Lohie?"

Mina and her mother started, and exchanged glances.

"Is he an Indian?" the latter inquired.

"By that *nom de guerre*, I should think so," answered the baron; "for I suppose it is a *nom de guerre*, it sounds like it. A man of colour he certainly is, unless he paints his face to keep up a sort of *prestige*. He is, next to Mandrin himself, the most desperate of the gang. They call him his lieutenant."

"Choiset tells me—he is our game-keeper, ladies," Raoul said; "that his eyes glare like a tiger-cat's. He knows a man who saw him some weeks ago, and who he says relates wonderful things of him. He is supposed to bear a charmed life, to carry about him some

mysterious talisman. He has taken the lead of late in all Mandrin's most desperate exploits, and always escapes the gendarmes' clutches. They are convinced he is a devil."

"Aye, and if they catch him," said the baron, "he runs a good chance of being hung like a dog to a tree, without trial or shrift."

"I wonder," said Madame d'Auban, hesitatingly, "if he can be the Natches we once knew, our friend Ontara's companion till they landed in France. His name was Osseo, but he may have been called Lohie by his comrades. Mina, my child, we must tell M. de la Croix that you think you saw him last night."

Mina turned crimson. A half-childish sense of fidelity, and compassion towards a persecuted people, made her loth to say a word which might lead to Osseo's apprehension. He was Ontara's relative, an exile, doomed to slavery, and ignorant of right and wrong. She felt more pity than horror of him, robber as he was. "Mamma," she said, in a low voice, and looking reproachfully at her mother, "we thought last night it was a mistake."

"Yes, love, but we did not know what we do now."

The baron eagerly asked for an explanation, and Madame d'Auban, seeing that her daughter did not utter, felt herself of course obliged to tell him exactly what she had heard from Mina on the previous evening. The ladies of the château turned pale, and the baron and his grandson went to give orders to set a watch round the castle, and search the ruins which might afford a hiding-place to the robbers. Now that he was on his guard, he prepared to give them a warm reception, and forbade any thing being said which would raise an alarm in the neighbourhood, and prevent their attempting an attack. He was strongly inclined to believe that Mina had really seen Lohie,

and that the Indian had been sent to reconnoitre the approaches of the castle.

The young people went out as usual, but Mina was silent and depressed. Raoul's gaiety jarred upon her. Her thoughts were fixed upon the vision of the day before. She wondered if the Indian still carried about the serpent in his bosom. The words the baron had said rung in her ears: "Hung like a dog." They made her shudder. She could not understand that her young companions did not feel these sort of things more. They did not understand her anxiety. "If Lohie is Osseo," Raoul said, "he deserves to be broken on the wheel; for he tried to make you his slave, the vile wretch. I should like to shoot him down like a wild beast."

"How can you say that?" said Mina, indignantly. "What would become of his soul?"

Raoul was a little puzzled. He said his prayers regularly, and meant to be good and save his own soul, but had not given much thought to those of other people, especially those of heathens and robbers. So he evaded the question, and did not revert to the subject.

As they were returning to the castle the baron met them, and took Mina into the hall. He asked her to point out the exact spot where she had seen that limb of Satan, Lohie. She showed him the window at which she had caught sight of his face. Then inspired with a sudden courage, she said:

"M. le Baron, will you tell the gendarmes not to kill Osseo till I have spoken to him?"

"You would not wish, my dear, to speak to a robber?"

"Oh, but I would, M. le Baron, indeed, indeed I would."

"He is an outlaw, like the rest of the gang, and our men may destroy them like vermin. But I have given orders

that if this Lohie or Osseo is caught he should be brought here alive, as he may give information as to the others. By the bye, Raoul tells me you speak the language of these savages, Mademoiselle Mina. As you are so courageous, we shall get you to examine him."

"Shall you put him into the dungeon?" she asked.

"Take care, grandpapa," Bertha cried; "Mina will let him out."

The baron looked grave.

"This man is a murderer and a robber. Mademoiselle Mina has been too well brought up, I am sure, to pity such a wretch."

Poor Mina! she did not answer, but she longed to say that it was because this man was a murderer and a robber, and an unbelieving, unbaptized heathen, that the thought of his sudden death wrung her heart.

The day went by somewhat wearily; and, as the night approached, some of the inmates of the castle felt restless and anxious. The ladies and the servants had related to one another stories of robbers and assassins till they had grown so nervous that a foot-fall on the stairs, or the rustling of leaves near the window, made them start and shudder.

The baron desired that every one should go to bed as usual, except the sentries to whom he had assigned their several posts. Madame d'Auban and her daughter withdrew to their room, and both fell asleep soon after going to bed. But Mina woke in about an hour, her nerves on the full stretch, and her heart beating like a pendulum. For two hours not a sound disturbed the tranquillity of the night. Then a sort of faintness, the result of intense watching, came over her. She slipped out of bed, put on her dressing gown and shoes, and a mantle, with a hood over her head. The door of the bedroom opened on an outward winding

staircase leading to the parapet. She opened it gently, and stood on the steps breathing the fresh air. There was no moon, but the night was not very dark: a few stars were visible, when the clouds divided in the sombre sky. She stood there for a few minutes, and was about to reënter the room, when she saw a figure ascending the steps perfectly noiselessly. She did not move or scream, but said in a low whisper, "Osseo!"

The figure stopped, and she heard it answer in the Indian language—

"Who are you that know Osseo?"

She stepped forward and said:

"I am Mina. In the city of the Natches you once called me your sister. Go away; the white men are watching for you, and will kill you. Throw away the serpent, Osseo: leave the wicked tribe."

"I have shed the blood of the white men," answered the Indian, in a low but distinct whisper: "the serpent delivers them into my hand. But the sound of thy voice is like water to the parched lip. O, daughter of the French tribe, come with me into the woods, and I will shed no more blood: I will lie down on the grass and listen to thy words."

"Osseo, in the name of the Great Spirit of the Christian's prayer, go away before my people kill thee. If I call out they will come."

"Maiden, the tribe that kills and steals is at hand, and if I whistle they will scale the wall and put thy people to death. But come with me, little bird of the west: I will hide thee from them before I give the signal."

"They cannot come, Osseo; they cannot come. There are armed men upon the walls. At the least noise they will rush upon thee."

"My fetish is stronger than they are," whispered the Indian, and Mina saw him feeling in his bosom for the

serpent. She shuddered, and stood transfixed to the spot, as if fascinated herself, and unable to raise her voice. There was a minute's silence. Then a flash and the report of a gun. The Indian had seized hold of the serpent more roughly than usual. The creature hissed, and sprang to his throat. He gave a violent start, and his gun, which he held with one arm against his shoulder, slipped, went off, and wounded him in the breast. The noise roused at once all the sentinels, and the baron and Raoul were in an instant on the spot. Torches threw light on the scene, and Mina was found kneeling by the Indian's side, who lay apparently dead. The serpent on his bosom was lifeless also. But when they took up Osseo, to carry him into the hall, it was perceived that he still breathed, and Mina implored the baron to send for a priest. Raoul went to fetch the curé, and her mother tried to take her away; but she turned round with an imploring countenance, and said:

"Let me stay, mother, in case he revives."

And the priest, who arrived at that moment, seconded her entreaties. Raoul had told him who the dying man was, and how anxious Mina was about his soul. Nobody quite understood what had happened. She looked for the baron, and said:

"He told me before the gun went off that the robbers were close at hand."

"Aye," said he, "we must be on our guard, then; but the sound of the gun will have frightened them away, I think. But how, in heaven's name, my child, were you speaking with this wretch?"

"I was standing at the door of our room, to get air, for I was faint, and I saw him gliding up the stairs. I called to him, and told him who I was, and begged him to go away—"

"The deuce you did!" ejaculated the Baron.

"But he would not go; and as he was feeling for his fetish—that serpent you see there—his gun went off."

"Hush!" said the curé; "I think he is moaning."

The Indian had opened his eyes and looked at the bystanders with a half-fierce, half-bewildered gaze, but when he saw Mina a more human expression stole over his features. He raised his hand to his mouth. This was a token he recognized her. The village doctor, who had been summoned, felt his pulse, and said he had not long to live. The young girl bent over him, and in accents low and sweet, spoke to him in his own tongue. The hall was by this time crowded, and every one was watching the dying man and the child, and the priest standing close to her. A pin might have been heard to drop. No one uttered a word but herself, and no one understood what she was saying except the dying man, whose eyes fastened themselves intently on her face. She looked inspired. On the ashy paleness of her cheek a red spot deepened into crimson as her emotion increased. Sometimes she raised her hand and pointed to the sky. Once he felt in his breast, as if searching for something there. She took up the dead serpent and showed it to him, then throwing it down she set her foot upon it, and held the crucifix before his eyes. Raoul de la Croix felt at that moment a thrilling sensation in his heart which he never forgot. He would fain have fallen at her feet; and her own mother gazed with awe on her child. At last the Indian spoke. His strength seemed for a moment to rally. He raised himself on his elbow, took the crucifix in his hand, and touched his forehead with it. Then in her ear he murmured a few words.

"Monsieur le Curé," Mina cried,

"he asks to be baptized. He believes now in the Great Spirit who died for him. He is very sorry to have robbed and killed His children. Oh, M. le Curé, will you baptize him?"

Whilst she was speaking, a spasm passed over Osseo's face, and the death-rattle sounded in his throat. There was no time to lose. The priest baptized him, and whilst the water was still flowing on his brow, the poor ignorant savage, on whom a ray of light had shone in the last hour of his life, died with his eyes fixed on the crucifix which Mina was holding in her clasped and upraised hands.

Those who had witnessed this scene had been deeply impressed. Mina herself did not seem at all conscious that she had been admired, or even much noticed, on account of the part she had taken in it. An immense weight was off her mind, and during the days which followed, she was often in high spirits. The friendship between her and the young de la Croix grew more and more close. The baron, delighted at the result of Mandrin's projected attack, and at the disappearance of his gang from the Forez, which followed upon his lieutenant's death, could afford to forgive Mina, and to laugh at her for her connivance, as he called it, with the robbers. Madame d'Auban, mean time, was counting the hours till her husband's arrival. He had written to say that he would leave Paris in two days. No positive promise had been given him about an appointment in Bourbon, and recent circumstances had made him averse to press the matter. He had accordingly contented himself with obtaining letters of introduction to the governor and one or two other French residents in the island. He added, that he had sent Antoine to their former lodgings in the Rue de l'Ecu, and that he had ascertained that the Comte de Saxe had called there,

and expressed great surprise at their departure. The landlord had told him they had left France as well as Paris, and were on their way to the Isle de Bourbon.

When Raoul heard that M. d'Auban was expected in a day or two, he looked more thoughtful than he had ever done in his life before. He could scarcely sit still a moment; and on the morning when he was expected, he rode to Montbrison to meet him.

As he walked up and down under the plane trees of the promenade, it seemed to him as if years instead of days had elapsed since the one on which he had handed out of the diligence Madame d'Auban and Mina. When the same cumbrous vehicle drove to the inn door, his heart beat fast, and before Colonel d'Auban had fairly set foot on the ground, he found himself clasped in the chevalier's arms.

"Ah! my young friend," he exclaimed, "I need not ask who you are. The warmth of your welcome would make me know it, even if you were not so like what your father was at your age, when we were at college together."

"Monsieur, he must have been younger then than I am now," said Raoul, who did not like to be considered as a collegian.

"Ah! but I knew him, too, after we had left Vannes, when he was about to be married."

"He married very young indeed," cried Raoul, eagerly "when he was about eighteen."

D'Auban then inquired after the health of all the members of the baron's family, and spoke of their kindness to his wife and daughter.

"Mademoiselle Mina is an angel!" Raoul said, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

D'Auban smiled, and then they both mounted their horses and rode out of the town.

D'Auban was delighted with his young companion. There was something so ingenuous, so frank, and so noble about him, and then he was so evidently in love with his little Mina. He related the story of Osseo's death with such an ardent enthusiasm about her goodness and her courage, and described how beautiful she looked by the side of the dying Indian, that the father's heart was touched, and tears stood in his eyes.

"If only," he murmured to himself, "if only the spirit does not wear out the frame!" and then turning playfully to his companion, he said aloud, "I had rather, M. Raoul, she had been playing at dominoes than playing the heroine. She has had enough of that sort of thing for a child like her."

"Ah! she is not a child, M. le Colonel."

"I fear not. Would she was, my young friend! She has known too early what it is to suffer. Is she looking well?" d'Auban anxiously asked, for he did not like to think of the scene she had gone through.

"Oh! yes. She has the most lovely colour in her cheeks, like that of a deep red rose, and such a brilliant light in her eyes!"

The boy's enthusiastic description made the father sigh. But when Mina ran out into the court of the castle to meet him, he was satisfied. She was looking stronger than in Paris, and seemed very happy. After receiving the most affectionate greetings from all the family, and seen the young people go off on a fishing excursion, Mina on the dun pony, and Bertha on a gray one, and Raoul walking alongside of them, their merry voices still ringing in his ears, he drew his wife's arm in his own, and they went into the parterre to take a quiet stroll, and talk over the incidents of the preceding days. If ever there was an instance of

the romance of wedded love in advancing life, and amidst the many changes it had brought with it, this was one. These two beings loved each other with the most intense of all affections—that of married lovers. The dangers they had gone through, if they had not added to the intensity of that affection, had preserved in it all the freshness of its romantic beginnings.

"This is happiness," she exclaimed, as they hurried into the garden, and sitting down on a bench which overlooked the valley, rested her head against her husband's shoulder, with a sense of blissful repose. He smiled, and fondly gazed on the pale fair face so passionately loved.

"And you do not mind, sweetheart," he said, "that we are poorer than ever, and that when we get to Bourbon we may have to live in a small cottage, and in a very different manner than at St. Agathe?"

"Perhaps," she said, with a little *malice*, "you are going to ask me, M. d'Auban, if I have no regrets for the King of France's magnificent offer, or for the suite of apartments I was to have occupied at the palace of Fontainebleau."

He laughed, and said, "It must be owned, madame, that you have treated his majesty somewhat unceremoniously."

"You know I had no direct message from the king. But, Henri, you have heard of Mina's heroic conduct about the poor Indian robber. I assure you that when she stood that night, with her little foot on the dead serpent, and the cross in her hand, it was like a heavenly vision. She rises before me over and over again in that attitude, and with the peculiar look in her eyes we have sometimes noticed. But I have something to communicate to you. What will you think of it? Madame Armand de la Croix has been

speaking to me about our child. It seemed to me very strange. Our own destiny has been so extraordinary, and Mina is so young really, though she looks grown up, that a regular proposal of marriage for her took me by surprise."

D'Auban started, and looked amazed.

"A proposal of marriage for Mina?"

"Yes; the baron is about to ask you for her hand for his grandson."

"If I did not hear it from you, love, I should deem it impossible. Raoul is the baron's heir, would he wed him with a portionless girl?"

"Madame Armand has owned to me, that a heavy debt of gratitude is due from their family to yours; that your grandfather and your father never would accept payment of the large sum which at the time of the League the former gave as a ransom for the life of the Baron Charles de la Croix; but that the debt is not cancelled in their hearts or in their memories. From the moment the baron heard you had a daughter, he determined, in his own mind, that the Chevalier Raoul should marry her, and since they have known Mina he is more bent upon it than ever."

"And what do *you* say to it, madame? Is the chevalier a good match enough for your daughter? I have always resolved to leave the decision of her fate in your hands."

His wife smiled and answered, "I ask only one thing for my child, that she should be free to accept or to reject the offer made for her hand. The twofold experience of my life has taught me beyond measure to value freedom on that point; I would not for the world have her controlled."

"She is too young to marry, and so is he."

"Ah, but what the baron proposes is that they should be affianced at once,

and then that the chevalier should travel for three years—at the end of that time, wherever we are, he will come and claim his bride.”

“I see, my sweetest wife, that the thought of this marriage pleases you.”

“I do not deny it. If I could have pictured to myself a fate I should have chosen for Mina, it would have been to enter a family of noble but yet not of princely birth, one in which I have witnessed the most admirable virtues and the purest domestic happiness. Young Raoul is handsome, good, and I need not apologize to you, Henri, for adding, though others might laugh at me—he is in love with her.”

“And does the little *Dame de ses pensées* return his passion?” asked d’Auban, smiling.

“Ah! I don’t know. That child of ours is often a great enigma to me. Open and guileless as she is, I am sometimes at a loss when I try to fathom the depths of her young heart.”

“Do not be too romantic, sweet wife. Far be it from me to force her inclinations, but at her age assent is sufficient.”

“You know no French young lady ever utters a stronger form of approval of the suitor presented to her acceptance than the admission, that he is not disagreeable to her. In this case we might rest satisfied with it. But there is one consideration I cannot quite get over. Is not the Baron de la Croix, are not all his family, making an effort of generosity in asking for the hand of our little portionless daughter? It is so contrary to French usages for a young man to marry a girl without a fortune, that I cannot quite rest satisfied that it is not an overstrained point of honour which alone induces them to make this proposal.”

Madame d’Auban looked a little pained, her cheek flushed. “Henri, do you give me credit for such a total absence of pride, as to think I should

have spoken as I have done if I had not seen beyond a doubt that the hearts of your friends are set upon this marriage;—had I not heard from Raoul’s mother, expressions which seldom fall in these days from the lips of French mothers, as to her hopes and fears for the darling of her heart; as to her knowledge of what Mina is, and her intense desire that his destiny should be united to hers? She never mentions our child since the night of Osseo’s death without tears in her eyes. But far be it from me, however, to urge you . . .”

“Enough, dearest, enough. I am more than satisfied,” exclaimed d’Auban, who felt he had unintentionally slightly wounded his wife’s feelings. Any destiny out of the common order, any transgression of the usual laws of society, even under the most favourable circumstances, at certain moments, sometimes long after old feelings and habits of mind have been apparently eradicated, tends to arouse slight emotions, delicate susceptibilities, which are like faint traces left on the soul of what once has been, visible only by certain lights.”

A conversation d’Auban held that evening with the Baron proved to him the justice of his wife’s appreciation of the old man’s real feelings; he was so thoroughly happy at the thoughts of an alliance with the family to which his own had owed so much, so full of delight at acquitting a debt of gratitude as regarded the past, and he kindly added, pressing his friend’s hand in both his, “in incurring a fresh one in the shape of the holy and beautiful child he asked of them for his Raoul,” that it would have been playing an unkind and ungracious part to reject, from a false delicacy, the proposal so cordially made. He seemed a little surprised, indeed, when d’Auban stipulated that the betrothal was not to

take place unless his little girl gave her full and free assent to it,—that her mother had made him promise this.

"But surely," said the Baron, "a young lady as well educated as Mademoiselle Mina, and of as amiable a disposition, would never dream of opposing her parents' wishes on such a subject."

"My best of friends," d'Auban answered, "Mina's education, not a bad one, thank God, has yet been in many respects peculiar. Events, more than teaching, have formed her character. She would doubtless obey our orders, but her mother's ideas on that point are strong, and she would never compel her daughter to marry, or to promise her hand to any one she did not herself freely choose."

The idea of young ladies choosing their husbands was quite a new one to the baron, and utterly distasteful to him. He would like to see Bertha and Isaure think of choosing for themselves, indeed! And as to Raoul, when he had informed him that he was about to ask for Mademoiselle d'Auban's hand for him, he had behaved as well as possible, and expressed his perfect submission to his grandfather's wishes.

"But I suppose your daughter is not likely to object to the chevalier," he said. "He has, I hope, made himself agreeable to her since she arrived here?"

"I should think your grandson as likely as any youth I have ever seen to win a young lady's heart," answered d'Auban; "and I trust that I may have the happiness of calling him my son."

On the morning of the next day, which was to be the last but one they were to spend at the Chateau de la Croix, Madame d'Auban sent for her daughter into her room from the library, where she had gone with Isaure, to copy some passages out of an old book

of poetry they had been reading together, and when Mina came bounding into the room she found her father and mother sitting together. They made room for her between them, and he said to her:

"Have you been very happy here, my daughter?"

"Yes; very happy," she answered. "Everybody has been so kind to me, and I love them all very much."

"They are all very fond of you, Mina. The Baron has been speaking to me about you."

"I was afraid he was a little angry with me, because I told Osseo to go away, instead of calling to the sentinels."

"Well, he seems to have forgiven you. He told me you were a brave little girl. I suppose you will be sorry to part with Isaure and Bertha?"

"Yes; and with Raoul also."

"Ah! you like him. I am glad of that. I have taken a great fancy to Raoul. He is very pleasing, and so good and noble-hearted."

"He ought to be good, for his mother, oh, dearest papa! she is quite a saint. I like so much to watch her when she is speaking to a poor person, or dressing their wounds. There is a little room, quite out of the way, where they come to her every morning; but I know where it is, and she lets me help her. She does not speak much, but the few words she says are full of love and sweetness."

"Then you would be glad to live some day with Madame Armand?"

"I would give the world to be like her."

"Then I think you will be glad to hear, my daughter, that she would like to call you her child?"

"Would she?" answered Mina, innocently; "then I wish she would."

"What I mean is that she and the Baron want you some time hence to

marry Raoul, and to be at once affianced to him."

Madame d'Auban's heart beat fast as her husband said this. Mina drew her arm from her neck and her hand from her father's, and sat up between them with her eyes fixed on the ground and the colour deepening in her cheeks. She did not speak. They remained silent also for a few minutes, and then her mother said:

"What is my Mina thinking of? Tell us, dearest, will you promise to marry Raoul?"

"No—no, I cannot promise to marry him. Oh, dearest papa, dearest mamma, do not ask me."

"And why not, Mina?" said d'Auban, looking vexed and disappointed.

"Because, papa, it would make me miserable; because" . . . a flood of tears stopped her utterance. She wept with what seemed passionate sorrow.

"My child," said her mother, anxiously, "speak, explain to us what you feel."

"Mamma, do you remember my telling you long ago that I would never marry a white man?"

"Oh, Mina, that old childish story!" exclaimed her mother; and her father said with impetuosity:

"You are no longer a child, my daughter; and I cannot brook this infatuation about Indians. You do not suppose that we should ever consent to give our daughter in marriage to a red man?"

"I know you would not, papa, and I will never ask you to do so. But I wish to keep my promise."

"A child's promise! which does not bind you in the least, Mina."

"Then, mamma, if I am too young to be bound by one promise, do not tell me to make another. I told Ontara I could not marry him, when we were at the Natches; and after he was baptized in Paris I said so again: but

when he was unhappy I promised never to marry at all, and to be always his sister; and it comforted him a little. Mamma, don't you remember that one day in Paris, when Julie d'Orgeville had been talking to me about her cousin Jeanne being forced to marry the old Count d'Hervilliers, and I asked you if you would make me marry against my will, you said, *never*? And, mamma, when you said it, I don't know why, but there were tears in your eyes, and you added, 'No, my own, you will never know what it is to wear gilded chains.'"

"But Mina, darling, you like Raoul, and you would be very happy with him."

A troubled look came into little Mina's face; some large tears gathered in her eyes. She heaved two or three deep sighs, and then hiding her face in her mother's bosom, she murmured:

"I could not be happy if I broke my promise."

Madame d'Auban fondly pressed her lips on her head, and, looking at her husband, smiled. Her womanly instinct was not at fault. She guessed what was passing in the child's heart.

"Mina," said her father, gravely, "if it is that foolish promise that weighs on your mind, Ontara would, I am sure, relieve you from it."

Madame d'Auban shook her head.

Mina started up. "Oh, papa, that would not be really keeping it. If you order me to break it in that way I must, but my heart will break too. Mamma, you remember the day you took his hand and put it on my head, when Osseo was going to force me away from you? We were friendless then; we were prisoners; and he had parents and friends, and brothers and sisters. We were condemned to death, and he saved me. He saved papa, who saved us all. And now he has only me—only

me to love him, I must keep my promise."

"Mina," said her father, sitting down again by her, "you are too young to understand what you give up when you say you will never marry."

The heavenly expression they sometimes noticed in their child's face shone in it, as she looked up and said:

"I would give up any thing to keep that promise."

"And if, which I never shall, I was to say you might marry Ontara, would you marry him?"

Mina closed her eyes, thought a moment, and then said "Yes," but in a tone that made her mother thrill all over, there was something so peculiar in the child's way of saying it.

She made a sign to her husband not to press the matter further; and they talked to her gently and soothingly, and said she should not be asked to make any promise to Raoul or any one else; that she might remain a child for some years to come, and plant flowers and sow seeds in a cottage garden at St. Denys.

She kissed them and went straight out on the steps which led to the church. At that moment Madame

Armand's poor people were passing through the gate on their way to the room where she received them. A woman was staggering under the weight of a sick child, and seemed ready to drop.

Raoul, who was passing through the court with his dogs, whistling a merry tune, caught sight of the beggar, and taking her baby in his arms, carried it to his mother. It was one of those indeliberate impulses which show the tone of a man's feelings. He was off again in a moment, not, however, before he had slipped an alms into the woman's hand. He seemed to tread on air, his handsome face was beaming with animation, and snatches of an old French song burst from his lips as he passed the foot of the stairs. He did not see Mina, who had been watching the little scene. She went into the church, and prayed a long time. It is said that St. Catherine of Sienna, in one of her mysterious visions, was offered her choice of a crown of roses and a crown of thorns. She chose the last, because it was like the one our Lord had worn. Had two different visions also passed before Mina's eyes, and had she made a similar choice?

CHAPTER IX.

So rich a close,
Too seldom crowns with peace affliction's woes.

Mrs. Hemans.

How often, oh, how often,
I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom,
O'er the ocean wild and wide!

For my heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear.

But now it has fallen from me,
It is buried in the sea,
And only the sorrow of others
Throws its shadow over me.

Longfellow.

It had not been easy to induce the Baron de la Croix to give up his favourite idea of a betrothal between Raoul and Mina; but her parents and Madame Armand, to whom Madame d'Auban had confided the grounds of her daughter's refusal, and her own belief that time would overcome her determination to lead a single life, out of fidelity to her promise and affection for her deliverer, found means to persuade M. de la Croix that the engagement must be deferred, and the ring of espousals which he had sent for from Moulins put aside for the present.

D'Auban assured him that, on the whole, it was better the young people should be free till they met again in two or three years, and could better judge of their own feelings.

"But I never heard of feelings in my youth," cried the baron. "The will of my father was the only feeling spoken of when I married Madame de la Croix; and nothing ever answered better than our marriage. But let it be as you wish. Wherever you are in three years' time—whether at the north or

the south pole—I shall send Raoul to ask for the hand of that pretty little heroine of yours, who, I hope, will not have found out by that time that she has feelings of her own. Feelings, forsooth! do you know, my dear d'Auban, that you have gained some strange ideas in the New World?"

"Or by staying out of the Old one, my dear baron. It is wonderful how absence modifies one's views of certain things. It takes time to tune oneself to the key of European civilization."

"Your daughter finds Raoul agreeable, I hope?"

"Indeed, she does; but truly, my dear friend, she is too much of a child fully to appreciate yet the honour you do her."

"But why is she then so tall? she takes one in."

"Ah! she has seen and felt too much for one so young."

"Ah! feeling again! Feeling and thinking will be the ruin of the present generation."

There was truth, in one sense, in the Baron's observation. The thinking of

Voltaire, and the feeling of Rousseau, made wild havoc with the happiness and the virtue of the French people. Wit and sentiment are powerful agents when arrayed on the side of infidelity and vice. The old *émigré* who said to Madame de Coigny, one of the cleverest women of the beginning of this century, "*Madame, ce sont les gens d'esprit qui ont perdu la France!*" was not, perhaps, altogether wrong, though it must have been tempting to answer, as she did, "*Ah, monsieur! et pourquoi donc ne l'avez-vous pas sauvée!*" But poor Mina's feelings were not of Rousseau's, or her father's philosophy of Voltaire's school; the Baron was quite satisfied that she was a modest and guileless child, and that his old friend was as staunch a Catholic as ever lived; but there was something he did not quite understand about them, something a little ahead of his own ideas of right and wrong; and it is curious how suspicious men are of what goes beyond their own standard, as much, and often more, than of what falls below it.

Raoul was very angry and very unhappy when his mother told him little Mina would not promise to marry him; and he took a long walk by himself, and would not speak to her all the evening. But before she went away, they made friends again, and she rode that last day the dun pony once more, and two or three times he saw her large dark blue eyes filling with tears, as Bertha and Isaure said affectionate things to her. And when he whispered, as he helped her off her horse in the court of the castle, "You are not sorry to part with me, Mina; you care only for my sisters!" she blushed deeply, and said, "I do care for you, Raoul—only—"

"Only what?" he asked, as they both stood by the pony, patting his head.

She did not speak, her heart was so full; she was afraid of crying.

"Only you like a savage better than me. Oh, Mina, I cannot forgive you."

"I never said so," she said, hiding her face in the pony's mane.

"I know all about it," he said, stamping his foot. "I guessed it immediately. I should like to call him out."

"Oh, Raoul!" she said, raising her tearful eyes to his, "who is a savage now?"

"But I cannot bear you to love him better than me."

"There are such different kinds of love. You never saved my life; you never adopted me; you are not alone in the world; you have every thing to make you happy, and he has nothing."

"If he has your love, Mina, he has every thing I care to have. But you say you have a kind of love for me. What sort of a love is it?"

"I don't know; I should like to die for him, if it would make him happy."

"But you would like to spend your life with me—to be my wife?"

"No; I will never be anybody's wife."

"I do not believe that, Mina. But will you make me a promise? Will you promise not to marry anybody else, till I come in three years to see you in the Isle de Bourbon?"

"I don't like to make any more promises," Mina answered sadly. "I do not think promises are good things. One must keep them, you know, Raoul. But I am sure I shall not marry till you come."

This was said with a look which was very like a promise. He felt it as such, and he told his mother so. And after Mina went away, he was always thinking of these words, and of her look when they were said. And he often patted the dun pony, and fed it out of his hand; and his sisters smiled when they saw how fond he was of it; and Isaure peeped into his room, one day, and saw on his table the book of old

romance he used to read to them in the library, and the life of Father Claver, which Mina had forgot in hers. She was very sorry when she missed it. It was the book *Ontara* and she were to finish reading when they met again, and she had left it behind at the chateau. Had she left any thing else behind? Not that she knew of, but her mother sometimes thought so.

Some months elapsed, and a ship was nearing the *Isle de Bourbon*. The passengers were standing on deck watching the coast becoming every moment more distinct. This vessel had had a long and wearisome passage. For three weeks it had been becalmed. Madame d'Auban thought of her voyage to America with the German emigrants, when her despair was at its height, and could not find it in her heart to complain now of the deep stillness which reigned on the sea; of the breezeless days and the sultry nights. Not but that she and her husband had anxious thoughts about the future. Not but that she dreaded, she scarcely knew why, the arrival at *Bourbon*. She had a presentiment—d'Auban had never persuaded her out of her belief in them—that a crisis in their fate was at hand; and perhaps, in spite of all the inconveniences of the voyage, she dreaded its coming to an end. But now the shores of the fair island, its verdant undulating hills with their grand background of mountains, rose before their eyes as they went on deck at sunrise. St. André and St. Suzanne, and the bright little river of St. Jean, and St. Denys, the town where they were to land, were successively pointed out to them. As they drew nearer they discerned the negroes at work in the fields, and the planters' houses, and the people almost all dressed in white, and wearing straw hats.

"Oh, mamma!" Mina exclaimed, "there is a concession, and such a pretty

habitation! And, oh, look at those palm-trees, and at those pines, and at the oleanders and the orange-trees, and the black women gathering the blossoms. Is it not beautiful? Is it not like Louisiana?"

As the ship glided into the port, crowds gathered at the landing-place to watch the disembarkation of the numerous passengers. A government officer came on board to examine the passports. They were handed to him, and as he read the names, he also attentively looked at the persons who presented them. When Colonel d'Auban's was given to him, he looked up quickly, and then said, in a low voice, to one of the men who accompanied him, "These are the persons the governor expects. He is to be immediately informed of their arrival. Send this passport at once to the government house."

Madame d'Auban overheard the whisper, and turned as pale as death. She was obliged to catch hold of her husband's arm to support herself. She instantly apprehended that a quicker sailing vessel than their own had previously arrived and brought orders to arrest them. This blow seemed almost more than she could bear. D'Auban had been looking ill again, and she had fixed her hopes on the benefit he would derive from a warm climate and a settled mode of life. The fear of fresh troubles and miseries seemed quite to overwhelm her.

"It was hard," she thought, "if they were not suffered to live in obscurity in this remote island."

Tired and exhausted, she began to weep bitterly, regardless of the bystanders. It was that sort of weeping induced by fatigue even more than by grief, but which, when joined with it, can neither be stayed nor checked. Her husband, who did not know the cause of her distress, hurried her on:

shore. Though the passport had not been returned, no one opposed their landing. Madame d'Auban and Mina were conveyed in a litter to the house of M. Thirlemont, a gentleman to whom a friend in Paris had recommended them, and who, with the well-known hospitality of the Bourbon creoles, had invited the new comers to take up their abode with him. He was one of the wealthiest landowners of the island, and his habitation, just outside the town, almost a palace. When the litter, carried by four blacks, stopped in front of the entrance door, he came out with his wife to greet their guests. When Madame Thirlemont caught sight of them, she cried out, "It is Madame d'Auban, monsieur, I told you it must be her," and to the astonishment of that lady she clasped her to her breast.

At the first instant neither Mina nor her mother recollected who she was, but after a minute both exclaimed almost at the same time, "Madame Lenoir!"

"Ah! not any longer Madame Lenoir," answered their hostess, as she led them through the hall into the drawing-room. "A life of single blessedness did not suit me at all. M. Thirlemont came on business to New Orleans soon after our deliverance from those abominable savages. I am sure we can never be thankful enough to Colonel d'Auban," she turned round and bowed to him, "for so gallantly coming to our rescue. Ah, my charming Mina, I hope since you have been in Paris, you have got over your preference for those wicked wretches who so nearly murdered us. But as I was telling you, M. Thirlemont offered me his hand, and I have really had no reason to regret having accepted it, though of course I did not do so without much hesitation, seeing all I had gone through in consequence of my

first marriage. Not that I mean to say that it was M. Lenoir's fault, poor man! Ah, Madame d'Auban, when we used to talk over our mutual sorrows, I was most to be pitied. Providence was, however, preparing for me a happy compensation," this was said with a sweet smile and glance at M. Thirlemont, whose jovial countenance and loud cheerful laugh seemed indeed calculated to offer a contrast to the tragical passages of Madame Lenoir's history.

After some further conversation had taken place, and just as Madame Thirlemont was about to conduct her guests to their apartments, a servant came into the room and presented a letter to M. Thirlemont. He hastily read it, and then placed it in his wife's hands. A cloud suddenly overshadowed her face, and her demeanour to her guests became cold and dignified. The letter was from the governor. It was a most puzzling one. There was no guessing its drift. "His excellency requested M. Thirlemont, at whose house he understood Colonel and Madame d'Auban had arrived, not on any account to let them depart before he had seen them, and added, that as soon as some pressing business he had on hand was concluded, he would come there himself, as he wished for a private interview with his guests."

The messenger who had brought this missive was cross-questioned by Madame Thirlemont, who went out to speak to him.

"The governor," he said, "had appeared excited when he heard of Colonel d'Auban's arrival, and immediately sent to inquire where they were gone. He had been ordered to lose no time in delivering the letter his excellency had written."

Madame Thirlemont made her plans. It struck her this was an emergency which required prudence and resolu-

tion. She hastened back to the drawing-room, and once more proposed to conduct Madame d'Auban to the chamber prepared for her, and then by a bold stroke, which might, if necessary, be explained away as an accident, she locked the door and carried away the key. Then rushing to the one where her husband had just left d'Auban, she took the same precaution.

"What are you doing, madame?" exclaimed the astonished M. Thirlemont, who was still in the passage.

The lady placed her finger on her lips, and drew her husband into a small room on the ground floor, which was his own sitting room. There she was proceeding also to lock the door, but this he would not stand.

"Madame, are you gone out of your mind?" he asked.

She again laid her finger on her lips, and answered, in an impressive whisper, "Monsieur, this is not the time for irrelevant, and I might add, indecorous exclamations. We are in a position of the greatest, of the most awful, responsibility. If I was liable to go out of my mind, I suppose I should have done so when M. Lenoir was murdered, or on the night when I so narrowly escaped being a martyr." Madame Thirlemont's idea of martyrdom consisted in dying a painful death, and going in consequence as a matter of course to heaven, a sort of *pisaller* which she evidently thought we must all come to at last.

"As I did not go out of my mind then, I suppose I shall not do so now, though the circumstances in which we are placed might very reasonably drive one mad . . ."

"Oh! if you please do not go mad, madame; that would only make matters worse, whatever the matter is; but—"

"Do not say *but*, M. Thirlemont. Look the matter in the face, and give

your attention to it. These people are the same who were in Louisiana at the time of the Natches insurrection. M. d'Auban led the force which delivered me and many others from the hands of the savages, and I saw them afterwards in New Orleans."

"Well, but what of that?"

"Oh! very well, M. Thirlemont; if it is 'Well, but what of that!'—if I am considered a fool—if every thing I say is turned into ridicule, I have done. M. Lenoir would not have acted in that way; he had reliance on my judgment; he never did any thing but by my advice—"

"And ended by being murdered, poor man!" ejaculated, in an incautious moment, M. Thirlemont.

This was indeed a fair ground of attack; a justifiable theme for his injured wife to descant upon. He had accused her of some sort of complicity with her first husband's murderers—of having, at least, recommended him to follow the course which led to that result; and there seemed for some time little prospect of M. and Madame d'Auban being released from captivity, or M. Thirlemont from the conjugal tête-à-tête, to judge from the torrent of words, pathetic, passionate, and utterly senseless, which flowed from his wife's lips. But it came to an end at last, and when she paused to take breath he inquired once again, but taking care to avoid any offensive insinuation, why their guests were to be suspected because they had been in Louisiana at the time of the insurrection, and shared, with many others, and Madame Thirlemont herself, the sufferings of the colonists. She then explained that somebody at New Orleans had once said to her that there were strange stories about the d'Aubans. No details had been given. One of those assertions had been made which, like the seed blown about by the wind, and

which gives birth to many a noxious weed, propagates mischief with fatal facility. A strange story about somebody, which the speaker himself does not know much about, has often done more harm than a positive calumny. A direct charge friends can reply to. But who could always deny that, in their own or others' lives there have been no strange stories? The few who knew the details of the one we have been describing, could certainly not have denied its strangeness.

"But why lock them up?" persisted M. Thirlemont. "Whatever stories there may be about or against them, I do not see the use of that."

"Not see the use of it? Why, does not the governor charge you not to let them go till he comes."

"But he cannot intend that we should keep them prisoners. He would have had them arrested, if such had been his meaning. For heaven's sake, go and unlock those doors before he arrives. I declare there is the sound of a horse's feet in the avenue! Give me the keys, and go and meet his excellency."

Madame Thirlemont hurried into the hall, and confronted with no little trepidation the Governor-General M. de La Bourdonnais, who had never honoured her before with a visit. She curtsied profoundly, and at once proceeded to assure him that it was by the merest chance in the world that the strangers who were just arrived happened to be at her house. From the first moment of their arrival, she had had suspicions that there was something unsatisfactory about them; indeed, it had been quite against her advice that M. Thirlemont had shown them hospitality: but gentlemen would have their own way. . . . M. de La Bourdonnais patiently awaited the ebbing of this tide of self-defence, a slightly sarcastic smile hovering on his

lips, and then requested to be shown into a room where he could see M. and Madame d'Auban. He was accordingly ushered into the drawing-room, where M. Thirlemont had politely led his guests, who had been perfectly unaware of their temporary imprisonment. Madame d'Auban, when she heard that the governor wished for an interview with her husband and herself, had trembled from head to foot, and the respectful manner with which he approached her only tended to heighten her fears. In her husband's heart a feeling of indignation was rising. Wild thoughts were passing through his mind about the tyranny of kings and the iron yoke of despotism. Both saw at once that her position was perfectly known, and that a crisis in their fates must be at hand. Still both preserved their self-command, and received with courteousness the governor's greetings. After a few preliminary remarks and inquiries as to their health, the length of their voyage, and their first impressions of the island, he said that the last ship from France had brought an order from his majesty (Madame d'Auban became very pale) to name Colonel d'Auban to the post of sub-governor of the island; and to offer him also the direction of all the agricultural operations carried on by the government in its own domains. He was also desired by the king to place at Madame d'Auban's disposal the habitation of St. André, one of the most salubrious and agreeable residences in the neighbourhood of St. Deny's; "as desirable a one," he added, in a low voice, "as the island could offer for a lady of exalted rank."

A deep flush overspread Madame d'Auban's cheek, which soon subsided. She looked at her husband. Their eyes met. "The king is very good," she said, in a faltering voice. Then hiding her face in her hands, burst into tears. M. de La Bourdonnais, with a well-bred

delicacy of feeling, led away M. d'Auban to another part of the room, and gave him some details about the post to which he was appointed, the emoluments of which had been doubled by his majesty's commands. He soon took leave of him and his wife with a courtesy and a kindness which ever afterwards marked his manner and conduct towards them. He made a gracious bow to Madame Thirlemont as he passed her in the anteroom, and advised her and her husband to hasten and pay their respects to the new sub-governor of the island, to whom they had so amicably extended hospitality. This was said with a smile, which had in it a slight mixture of French malice, the most different thing in the world from malice in English.

The poor hostess experienced as strong, if not as interesting, a revulsion of feeling, as that which her guests had felt a moment before, when the announcement had been made to them of so unexpected a happiness. She quivered all over. She repassed in her memory every word she had uttered, every civility she had omitted or performed towards the new dignitaries. She went back in thought even to the old days at the Natches, and to the night when she and Madame d'Auban had been about to die side by side. She was very glad of her good fortune, and when, on entering the room, the pale, gentle woman who had suffered so much, came forward to meet her with tears in her eyes, but a smile on her lips, the good feelings of her heart overcame her uneasiness, and she, too, wept for joy at another's happiness. For it was happiness she could understand and sympathize in, that of being sub-governess of the Isle de Bourbon and enjoying a good income, and possessing the best house in the island. She did not know of the relief, the peace, the release from the disquietude

of ceaseless apprehension that was pervading the heart of one by whose side she sat, whose hand she held. She sympathized with the obvious good fortune which had befallen Madame d'Auban, and did not at all wonder at an emotion, the cause of which she little appreciated. It did not seem to her at all excessive for the occasion. She would have been herself much more agitated if M. Thirlemont had been named sub-governor of the island. On the whole, Madame d'Auban took it very calmly, she thought. Yes! she was calm with the calmness of one who has long battled with the waves, and has reached a peaceful shore; calm with the calmness of a heart at rest. Calm as those are from whom a great anguish has passed away, to whom a great blessing has been vouchsafed. She could lie down and rise in peace. Her husband was now her own. The fear of separation was no longer before her eyes. His energies would be once more directed in high and useful channels. The house promised to them was all they could desire. Its vicinity to the sea would, she knew, be to d'Auban an immense enjoyment, like a friend of his childhood, cheering his declining years. If the trees round St. André were not so grand as those of the primeval forests; if the flowers did not blossom as spontaneously in its gardens as in the wild pleasure-grounds of Louisiana, there would be beauty in abundance about their new abode, and more repose, more security, a stronger home-feeling in their position, than in the lodge in the wilderness so much loved in former days.

Before the Governor left, he had placed in Madame d'Auban's hands a sealed packet, containing letters which explained the change in their fortunes. There was a long one from the Comte de Saxe. He spoke of his own surprise at her departure, which he felt some-

what afraid of announcing to the king. Important political events had, however, happily supervened, and turned his majesty's thoughts in another direction; and some days elapsed, during which no inquiries were made as to the princess and the interview which the comte had had with her.

In the mean time, the Queen of Hungary's reply to the king's letter arrived. It expressed in courteous terms her majesty's gratitude for the French monarch's information on a point so deeply interesting to her. Her royal relation, she assured him, would be most warmly welcomed by her, and every honour and attention due to her rank paid to the sister of her late mother. His majesty's gracious offers with regard to the gentleman whom the princess had espoused in America, and the child that had been born there, would, doubtless, be gratefully accepted by all parties. It would, of course, be impossible, as his majesty justly observed, that the princess, restored to her rightful position, and received by her as her aunt, should acknowledge that person as her husband. But she trusted that a separation so inevitable under the circumstances, and softened by the generous goodness of his majesty to all parties, would be acquiesced in without difficulty. "On the receipt of this letter, the king immediately sent for me," wrote the count. "He had it in his hand when I entered, and after reading it aloud, he said, 'You must immediately communicate this important intelligence to the Princess Charlotte of Brunswick, and advise with her as to the time and manner in which she desires to avail herself of her royal niece's invitation.' I have received a favourable report of Colonel d'Auban's character and abilities, and I shall take care of his fortune. It is fortunate that the princess did not marry an adventurer." I felt myself obliged to broach

at once the state of the case to his majesty. 'Sire,' I said, 'women have always been unaccountable beings; they never feel or act as we should expect. What will your majesty think, when I tell you that the Princess Charlotte has eloped with her husband?' The king started. 'When?' 'A few days ago, sire.' 'Why did not you inform me of this at once, M. de Saxe?' 'I did not know it myself, sire, till after the princess was gone; and I have since been occupied in seeking to discover where the married lovers have fled.' 'And have you succeeded in doing so?' 'Sire, they have sailed for the Island of Bourbon.' 'What an extraordinary infatuation!' said the king. 'Strange, indeed,' I answered with a sigh. 'But there is no reasoning with a woman when she happens to be fond of her husband.' The king laughed and said: 'The queen is capable of admiring her. But what can we do for them, M. de Saxe?' 'Leave them alone, sire: wilful people deserve to suffer.'

"Suffer!" his majesty said, 'You do not mean that the princess is without fortune?'

"I answered nothing; and the king, after a moment's thought, exclaimed:

"I will make M. de Fréjus write to M. de La Bourdonnais and desire him to treat Madame d'Auban with the greatest consideration, and to bestow upon her husband the post of sub-governor of the island, which happens to be vacant since M. d'Eperville's death. Will that do, M. de Saxe?"

"I kissed his majesty's hand with more fervent gratitude, madame, than when his majesty promised me the next bâton de Maréchal de France."

"And I suppose," the King said, 'that I must inform the Queen of Hungary that her royal aunt has played truant, and left us all in the lurch. Upon my word, M. de Saxe, I like her

for it. But I wish I had seen those blue eyes I have so often heard of.'

"Madame I have but a few words to add. By his majesty's desire I secretly informed your royal highness's brother and the other leading members of your family of the extraordinary events already disclosed to her majesty the Queen of Hungary, of the decision you had taken, madame, and of your recent departure from France. The answers returned to this communication all agreed in acquiescing in the course your royal highness has adopted. In the complicated state of affairs between Russia and the German powers, it is deemed advisable that the existence of the Czarovitch's widow should not be brought forward to public notice. Had your royal highness claimed from your relatives the recognition which would have enabled you to resume your position, they would have felt themselves bound to accede to your desire, and publicly to acknowledge your identity. But under existing circumstances, the course your royal highness's own wishes have marked out is considered by the duke your brother, and the other members of your family, as the most conducive to your peace of mind, and the tranquillity of your relatives. They are desirous, however, to secure to your royal highness an annual income sufficient to remove all pecuniary embarrassments in the position chosen by yourself, and have entrusted to my care the necessary arrangements for this purpose. I am charged, madame, to express to your royal highness the affectionate sentiments of your royal brother and of your other relatives, and their regret that an unprecedented destiny should have placed an insuperable bar between persons so closely allied by the ties of consanguinity."

The day came to an end at last, and Madame d'Auban was alone in her room with her husband and her daughter.

They could sit quietly together, looking back to the last four years of their lives as to a feverish dream, and forward with grateful hearts to one of usefulness and peace. If they had been allowed to choose for themselves, they could not have fixed on a destiny more in accordance with their wishes than the one Providence had assigned to them. From the window, where they were sitting, they could see their future habitation in the midst of orange gardens and coffee plantations, and trees bending under the weight of the most beautiful fruits, the blue sea breaking gently on the smooth yellow coast; the evening breeze rippling its surface without stirring its depths. They could scarcely speak, their hearts were too full.

"My Mina, is not this a beautiful land?" said her father, looking fondly at his child.

"An earthly Paradise," murmured her mother, clasping her to her breast.

Mina threw her arms round her neck and covered her with kisses. Then she followed with her eyes her father's hand as he pointed out to her the habitation of St. André, and they rested on the sugar-cane and cotton fields, and on long lines of negroes marching home from their work, followed by an overseer with a whip in his hand. She cried:

"O how beautiful is the sea! and how lovely the trees and the sky! and the most beautiful thing of all, mamma, is the smile on your face. I have not seen you smile quite in that way since we left St. Agathe!"

"Papa," she said, gently stroking her father's hand, "you will have to manage a great many plantations here besides the one we see from this window, round St. André."

"Yes, my sweetest; please God, we may do some good here."

"You will have a great many slaves?"

"Yes, my child; there is no work done here except by slaves."

"I wish I had not left Father Claver's Life at the Château de la Croix, papa. There are no slaves there. I should like to read it again here."

"Do not you know it by heart, Mina?" said her father, smiling.

"Almost by heart," she answered slowly, with her eyes again turning towards the plantations, and the long files of black men bearing their burthens home. The story of that life-long apostleship amongst the slaves of Brazil had, indeed, been conned by the young girl till it had awakened thoughts which—

Condensed within her soul,
And turned to purpose strong.

There is happiness, real, intense happiness in this world. How should we guess at the joy of heaven, if we had never tasted happiness on earth? There are moments when our hearts seem too full of bliss for their strength. When an innocent ardent wish is fulfilled; when a great happiness has come to one we love more than ourselves; when a long anguish is at an end, or a new gladness has come to our homes, there is a light, a brightness, a radiance thrown over our lives beautiful in its way, and it is often good to have felt it. Pure earthly joys are blossoms which often bear fruit when they are themselves withered and gone. And there are Hallowtide summers in the autumn of life which have a softened brilliancy of their own—breathing times allowed in the race of existence. Such were the years which followed the arrival of the wanderers in the Island of Bourbon. By the dark blue sea he so much loved, amidst the spicy groves and orange flowers of that delicious land, in the performance of pleasant duties and the fullest enjoyment of domestic happiness, their hearts over-

flowing with affection for each other and for their child; beloved by their dependants; all but worshipped by their slaves, whose fate was exceptionally happy, and generally liked by their neighbours; months and years went by in peaceful serenity. Some colonists, indeed, were wont to remark that Colonel d'Auban had eccentric ideas on certain points. He had been known to invite to dinner a well-educated quadroon, and to take into his house the widow of a man who had died of a broken heart, because his father had cursed and disinherited him for marrying a woman with negro blood in her veins; and he permitted his daughter to do extraordinary things, which did not always meet with public approval. But the girl was so beautiful, and so beloved, and looked so like an angel, that much was not said on that score. And Madame d'Auban we would fain take leave of her in her pretty rooms, or her charming garden; greeting every friend with kind words, every stranger with a courteous smile, every sufferer with soothing sympathy. Less active than of yore, for the climate was enervating, she often reclined on a couch in the verandah, whence she could see the waves rippling on the shore, and the white vessels nearing the coast. Visitors crowded about the sub-governor's lovely wife, and whispers went abroad that she was not born a thousand miles away from a palace. Rumours more or less removed from the truth, but generally credited in the island, ascribed her ample means, her boundless generosity, and the union in her manner of courteousness and dignity, of kindness and reserve, to a regal origin, vaguely and variously hinted at. Yes, it would be well thus to part with her. The present is bright, and the future smiling. For Raoul de la Croix is soon coming to seek his young bride, now no longer portiouless, and when

Mina is happily married there will be nothing left for her mother to wish. This would be a pleasant way of concluding a tale; but the story, the legend, if you will, which we have been endeavouring to illustrate, ends not here; and there are some who may wish to trace to its close the course of so strange a life. For them the following pages are written. Let others close the book, if from weariness they have not done so yet.

CHAPTER X

Here I fain would end,
Leaving her harbour'd; but her stern kind fates,
Not thus forwent her. Like her life, her death;
Not negative or neutral; great in pains,
In consolations greater. *Aubrey de Vera.*

Slowly across the gleaming sky,
A crowd of white angels are passing by;
Like a fleet of swans they float along,
Or the silver notes of a dying song,
Like a cloud of incense their pinions rise,
Fading away up the purple skies.
But hush, for the silent glory is stirred,
By a strain such as earth has never heard.
Open, Oh heaven! we bear her,
This gentle maiden mild,
Earth's griefs we gladly spare her,
From earthly joys we tear her,
Still undefiled.
And to thine arms we bear her,
Thine own, thy child.
Open, Oh heavens! no morrow
Will see this joy o'ercast,
No pain, no tears, no sorrow,
Her gentle heart will borrow;
Sad life is past.
Shielded and safe from sorrow,
At home at last. *Adelaide Proctor.*

MANY years later than the date of the last chapter, at the close of a November day, in Brussels, the shutters were being closed in the small sitting-room of a *rez du chaussée* in the *rue de Parc*, not far from the Cathedral of St. Guldé. A lamp had just been placed on the table, where an elderly lady, dressed in black, was tying up a variety of parcels, and writing upon them the names of the articles they contained.

"Antoine," she said to the old man who was stirring the fire and trying to

make the room comfortable, "is not to-morrow the day that the case must be sent to the Foreign Missions?"

"To-day is Thursday; to-morrow consequently Friday. Yes, madame, I must take it to the office before four o'clock."

Then lingering by the table as if glad of an excuse for remaining in the room, he glanced at the parcels and said—

"My goodness! how glad Père Marie Guillaume will be when he looks at all

these fine things! Let me see; madame sends him six dozen crucifixes—he asked for three dozen in his last letter—and as many dozens of rosaries and pictures; and the Gospels just printed in Paris, in the Indian language; and a chalice, a very handsome one too! and vestments they would not despise at St. Gudule. Faith! the good father will be famously well set up. And what are these things, I wonder! Clothes, I declare; red and blue and yellow handkerchiefs for Mesdames les Sauvageuses, as poor M. de Cham-belle used to say."

"Somebody is ringing, Antoine. It is perhaps M. le Curé, or the nuns of St. Charles."

Antoine went to the door, and remained for a few minutes in conversation with the person outside. When he came back into the room he looked a little excited.

"A gentleman asks to see madame—somebody she knows very well, but whom she has not seen for a long time."

"Who is it?" she quickly answered.

"Madame, it is the Comte Maréchal de Saxe."

Madame d'Auban, for the pale and now gray-headed woman in this little lodging was the same who, during half a century of her earthly pilgrimage, had gone through such extraordinary vicissitudes, heaved a deep sigh and passed her thin hand over her brow.

"Beg M. le Maréchal to come in," she said, and rose to receive him.

There was but little visible emotion in her manner when first they met. He seemed embarrassed, as persons often are when they come into the presence of one whom they suppose to be in great affliction. She greeted him kindly, but a careless observer would have said, coldly—

"It is very good of you to have

thought of me, M. de Saxe. Several years have elapsed since my return to Europe, and during all that time I have not seen any one I used to know. You are looking well. I perceive time has dealt leniently with you. It is only in fame that you can be considered old." This was said with a smile which recalled to his mind, though faintly, the smiles of other days.

"And you, madame," he answered, "you whom fate has so cruelly used . . ."

She waved her hand, and interrupted him. "No, my dear friend, say not so; God has been very good to me."

For a moment neither of them spoke, he looked at her faded eyes, her gray hair, tied and turned up according to the fashion of the day, but not powdered, only bound by a black ribbon, and a cap such as widows wore at that period. He remembered how those pale blue eyes had flashed the last time they had met at the thought of a human power thrusting itself between her and those she loved, and now, "the fire has gone out of them; quenched by many tears," he said to himself. And then he glanced at a picture over the chimney, but quickly turned his eyes away till he saw that hers were fixed upon it.

"Do you think it like?" she asked.

"I never saw in my life any thing so like," he answered; and then after a little hesitation, said, "Madame, I have never forgotten that face. It has haunted me at strange times, and in strange ways. Is it painful to you to speak of her?"

"No, Maurice, I find a sweetness in it. Except sometimes to my old servant, I never breathe her name. But it is not because I fear to do so. You remember her, then?"

"I see her as if she was still standing before me with her wonderful beauty,

and that gaze which had in it all a woman's tenderness and a child's simplicity. It was not her mind only, but her whole soul which seemed to speak in her face. Ah, madame! how could death be so cruel as to rob you of that fair creature? How dared it to approach her?"

"She did not think it cruel, she welcomed it with a smile, and the last words on her lips were *Deo gratias*."

"Was it a sudden illness snatched her from your arms, princess, or did you watch the slow decline of that young existence?"

"Do you wish to hear about her, M. de Saxe? Would you like her mother to relate to you the life and death of the little girl you remember so well?"

"Nothing could interest me more. But you, dear friend, have you the strength to go through this recital?"

"I should wish you to know what she was. How in the words of the Bible, 'Being perfect in a short space she fulfilled a long time.' Ever since she could think or speak, Mina's passion, if I may so speak, was charity. At the time you knew her, the temporal sufferings and the spiritual necessities of the people amongst whom she was born, the Indians of North America, were continually in her thoughts, and her attachment to the young Indian who had adopted her as his sister at the period of our captivity, partly arose from this engrossing feeling. She looked upon him as the representative of that suffering race, and before we left France, she refused the hand of the Chevalier de la Croix, whom we wished her to marry, on account of the promise she had made to this Indian not to marry a white man. She seemed to consider it as a pledge to devote herself in some form or other to his, and, as she called them, her own people. We did not thwart her on this point, which we looked upon as a

childish fancy. She was too young at that time to be married, and the chevalier's parents were willing to wait. After our arrival at Bourbon, and our establishment at St. André, the slaves became the object of her intense solicitude. Whilst we were still in America, at the convent I believe, she had become possessed of a life of Father Peter Claver, which had made the deepest impression on her. You are not a Catholic, Maurice, but you may have heard of this wonderful man?"

"Is he not the priest who was called the apostle of the Brazils?"

"Yes; for forty years and more he laboured under the burning sun of South America, and devoted himself, soul and body, to the conversion of the negroes in and around Carthage. His life was spent in consoling, relieving, and instructing them. In the pestilential holds of the slave ships he went to greet them on their arrival. He passed whole days in the noisome buildings to which they were consigned on landing, breathing an air which after a few minutes caused the strongest men to faint away. He followed them to the scenes of their labours; to the homes of their purchasers. He mediated between them and their masters, and exposed himself to ill treatment for their sakes. It was given to him to work miracles in their behalf; the hearts of cruel men softened when he spoke; cupidity and cruelty stayed their hands at his word. M. de Saxe, from the moment of our arrival at St. André, Mina took this holy man for her model; and I dare to say that in her measure, and with her feeble strength, she copied into her own the features of that saintly life. The same love which burnt in his heart, inflamed hers. It was a consuming fire. It sustained her strength, even whilst her fragile form wasted away. It could not be stayed. We could not,

dared not, stop her work. She would have obeyed our commands, but the effort would have destroyed her more quickly than the work itself. What that child effected in three years is almost incredible. How many she instructed, converted, and reconciled to their fate. How many she brought to be sincere Christians, instead of nominal converts. How many she saved from cruel treatment; for she sometimes succeeded where the magistrates, and even the governor himself, had no power, and priests no influence. There was scarcely a slaveowner in the neighbourhood who would not listen to her when she begged, on her knees, and as a favour to herself, the remission of a sentence or the pardon of a runaway slave. She was so beautiful, so engaging, so eloquent. M. de La Bourdonnais, that great and good man, now in the Bastille, for having dared to defend the cause of humanity and good faith against the passions and prejudices of interested men, used to say that when discouragement at the sight of evil, which all his efforts could not prevent, stole upon him, the sight of Mina at work amongst the slaves, strengthened and cheered him. And the poor negroes of our own plantations, how they worshipped her! And with what wonder those freshly imported from Africa looked upon the white angel who met them on their arrival! Many of them, when they landed after the horrors of the passage, were sunk into sullen despair. They were persuaded that nothing but tortures and death awaited them, and would not listen to any white man, whether priest or layman. But Mina could always gain a hearing. She had learnt the Angola language, which most of them speak; or, if they belonged to other tribes, her early acquaintance with the use of signs gave her facilities for communicating with them.

I really believe that at first they took her for a celestial visitant. No other European woman came near them. The sight of their wounds—the stench of the places they inhabited on first landing—kept them away, even from the vicinity of these buildings. But she used to go with her father or with Antoine. I can see her before me, even now, starting on these errands of mercy; her face literally beaming with joy; her large straw hat shielding it from the sun; the wide pockets of her green silk apron filled with sweetmeats and biscuits, whilst some of our own slaves carried behind her fruit and wine and cooling drinks. The angel in the fiery furnace, breathing a moist refreshing wind through its flames, could scarcely have been more welcome than this dear child in those haunts of woe. She used, her father told me, to kiss the children and embrace the women. He hardly liked to see her do it, so loathsome sometimes were those poor wretches; but the effect was unfailing. Their hearts were touched, and despair vanished before her like a dark mist before the sunshine. And it was all done so simply, so joyously! It was such a real joy to her. When notice was given us of the arrival of a ship laden with slaves, her impatience to rush to the port, her active preparations, her solicitude as to the selection of her little gifts and offerings, was like that of an affectionate child anticipating the arrival of much-loved relatives. M. de Saxe, am I wearying you?"

"Madame, I remember once saying to your angelic daughter, that next to fighting battles, I loved to hear of them. Next to the happiness of performing heroic deeds, is that of listening to the record of such a life as hers."

"We saw that she was growing every day more delicately fair, her complex



ion more transparent, and the light in her eyes more unearthly in its brightness. But there was no feebleness in her step—no alteration in her spirits. She was always ready for every exertion. No call upon her strength seemed to tax it too much. She used to ride with her father, or with our old servant if he was too busy, to every hut in the neighbourhood where there was sickness, to every spot where help or consolation was needed. Sometimes, if a great wrong was done, or some act of cruelty committed towards a slave which she could not prevent, a passionate burst of grief and indignation would shake her frail form, and bring out a crimson spot upon the marble paleness of her cheek. She would go into a church, or into her own little room, and I have heard her pray for hours prostrate on the ground. I have no doubt her prayers were heard, and often obtained what she sought.

“Three years and more had elapsed since we had left France. One day a letter came which announced the approaching arrival of the Chevalier de la Croix. A singular feeling came over both my husband and myself, as we found afterwards, though at the time we did not know how to put it into words, and did not mention it to each other. We wished as much as ever this marriage to take place, but we dreaded to speak of it to Mina. Less than ever we felt that she could be constrained in the free exercise of her choice of a state of life. Perhaps she would still plead the old promise, the old allegiance she had alleged three years before. She had not alluded to it again, nor had we spoken to her of marriage. Letters had passed between her and Ontara. He seemed to be making rapid progress in knowledge and in virtue. In two years his studies would be finished, and then he hoped to visit us in our new home. One day,

about this time, she received one from him, and the expression in her face whilst she read it, immediately showed me that its contents were deeply interesting. An exclamation burst from her lips; she let the letter drop, and clasping her hands together, she bent her head over them, pouring forth thanksgivings, as I found afterwards, but at the moment I felt uneasy, not knowing if she was sorrowing or rejoicing. But the instant she raised it, I saw it was joyful emotion which filled her soul.

“What is it, dearest?” I asked, still feeling anxious.

“‘I am too happy!’ she cried. ‘Oh, too, too happy! It is what I have longed and prayed for. Ontara is going to be a priest. God has put it into his heart to devote himself to His service, and to that of his brethren. As soon as he is ordained, he will be sent to the Missions of New France to preach the Gospel to his own people. Oh, dearest mamma, I am so happy; I have nothing left to wish. He will do for them what I could never have done. Mamma, you know the Indians were my first love, though I am so fond of our poor negroes now.’

“Well, I was very happy also, and yet my heart was not free from a vague uneasiness. I have always been a believer in presentiments; is it not one of our German traditions? Some days afterwards we spoke to Mina of Raoul’s approaching arrival, and her father said to her:

“‘Now, my Mina, that Ontara has renounced every worldly tie, I suppose you consider yourself free from a promise which we always told you was not binding?’

“She smiled, and answered—

“‘Oh yes, he gives me back my promise in his last letter. I do not think he thought of it, of late at least, as seriously as I did.’

“‘And have you now any difficulty

in receiving Raoul de la Croix as your future husband?'

"I have never forgotten the expression of her face when this question was put to her. She did not seem troubled or grieved, or glad, but a tender, thoughtful look came over it. She took up her long accustomed position between us, joined our hands together, and then kissing them, said, 'Would it make you happy?' Her father said, 'Yes.' I kissed her without speaking. 'Let him come,' she said; 'dear Raoul, I shall be so glad to see him.' My dear friend, he came, and she received him with that holy serenity of expression which you see in her picture. It was taken at that time. She showed him much affection, maidenly, tender, gentle love. He was all that we could desire, good, generous, and brave. He had treasured up in his heart the remembrance of Mina, as he had known her at fourteen, and he all but worshipped the girl of seventeen who was about to become his wife; but he has since told me that though he fell passionately in love with her, he had, from the first moment of his arrival, a misgiving that there was something too pure, too ethereal, he had almost said, too divine about her for an earthly bride. I think myself that she had a clear presentiment of her approaching death, and did not expect to live to marry him. She seemed very happy during the weeks which followed his arrival. Two or three times she said, 'I am so glad Raoul is come. I am so glad you will have a son.' I used to listen to his joyous laugh and her sweet voice mingling together, as they sat on the seashore, like the whispering of the breeze and the ripple of the waves. She seemed willing to give up much of her time to him, and was always ready to talk and to laugh when he was in the humour for it. Poor Raoul! he is now married, and

has children, but I do not think as long as he lives he will forget those conversations in the shaddock grove, by the blue southern sea. I observed that she visited by turns all her poor negroes, and made them little presents as if taking leave of them, though nothing had yet been said about her departure from Bourbon. We knew she must go to Europe if she married, but no definite time had been mentioned."

Madame d'Auban paused, and the Maréchal de Saxe exclaimed abruptly, "You cannot go on. I am sure you cannot go on!" His eyes were full of tears.

"Yes," she said, "I will tell you all. This is probably the last time we shall meet, and the last time I shall speak of her to one whom I knew and she knew. I should not have done so, perhaps, but that a short time before she died, she said she hoped I should see you again, and that I was to give you her love."

Tears were now running down the maréchal's cheeks, and he murmured, "God bless her!"

"It was one morning, on a very hot day, that she fell ill, that is, if that painless, quiet sinking into the arms of death, which it was, could be called an illness. A ship laden with slaves had arrived in the night, and when she heard of it, as usual, she prepared to ride to St. Denys. But when on the point of starting, she fainted away, and was obliged to lie down. Antoine went alone with their usual attendants. I saw a change in her face and in her manner. She did not seem grieved, as she would usually have been, to give up this active office of charity. It seemed as if she felt that her work was done—as if the signal of eternal rest was sounding in her ears. From that moment her strength did not rally. She sat or reclined in the shade, with

her eyes fixed on the sky or on the sea, or fondly turning from one loved face to another, with a look of indescribable tenderness. Not one of them to whom she was so dear, felt surprised when it became evident that she was dying. Not one of the breaking hearts gathered round that angel form thought to keep her on earth. Nor father, or mother, or lover. She was too fit for heaven; too clearly on her way home. The work of a life had been done in a few years. The earthly frame worn out; the soul breaking its bonds. There was wail weeping amongst the crowds that gathered round our doors, when it became known that she was dying, and prayers were put up in all the churches for her recovery. But the word recovery had no meaning for us. We bent down in anguish, but did not pray to detain her.

"She left us fourteen days after the one on which the slave-ship had arrived. Her last thought was for the poor wretches it had brought. The priest who gave her the last Sacraments, told her of some little children born during the passage, whom he had just time to baptize before they died. She smiled, and said, '*Deo gratias.*' Those were the last words she uttered."

Madame d'Auban remained silent. The *maréchal* attempted to express sympathy, but broke down in the attempt. He could only murmur:

"God knows I feel for you, madame, and I admire your fortitude. Has it never forsaken you?"

Her lip quivered.

"There came a time when it gave way, Maurice. For seven years we remained in the place whence she was gone. Her father took up her work, and as long as he lived I could look calmly on those bright skies and those sunny seas, and the negroes toiling in the fields. He was stemming, with all his might, the evils of their lot. He

was doing what she had done. But when he was taken from me, he on whom I leant with a too absorbing love, when for a while resignation was only despair, I loathed the sight of all that natural beauty and that moral misery. I longed for obscurity, silence, and shade. Not that of the forest, not that of the green glade or the quiet valley. I fled back to the Old World, to the deeper solitude of a city. The dark cathedral, the obscure dwellings of the poor, the crowds that take no heed of a stranger, and this little room in an unfrequented street, are more congenial, more soothing to me now than Nature's loveliest scenes, more peaceful than its most silent haunts."

"And here you dwell alone, princess, alone with your grief?"

"Say, rather, dear friend, alone with blessed memories, alone with dearest hopes, alone with God—bereft of all that looks like happiness, and yet happy. And now tell me something of yourself, Maurice, and speak to me of my sister's children, and of my brother. I sometimes send for a number of the '*Gazette de France*' and see their names in it, but not with the old painful feelings it used to cause me. I think my heart has softened towards them, towards every one of late years. Is it true what I read some time ago, that with the *bâton de maréchal*, his Majesty the King of France has given you the domain of Chambord, with a right royal endowment?"

"It is perfectly true, princess. Fortune has been a kind mistress to me, and the king a generous master. I have nothing to complain of at their hands, and yet . . . to-night I am almost inclined to envy you, your sorrows, your obscurity, and . . . your faith. I believe you are happier than I am."

Again, as when they had first spoken together, she smiled in her old way,

and the face, once so beautiful, lighted up for a moment. They talked a long time, that night, of past events. They went back to scenes of early youth, and then kindly and sadly parted never to meet again. He died a short time afterwards; she lived to an advanced age.

With him passed away the last link between her and the world she once

belonged to. She lingered long on earth, a deceiver, and yet true; unknown, and yet known; as one dead, and yet alive; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; needy, and yet enriching many. Her life was a mystery; her story has become a legend. In the by-ways of history she has left a name, which may indirectly point a moral, whilst it serves to adorn a tale.

APPENDIX.

PART FIRST.

THE late Lord Dover published, in the "Keepsake" of 1833, a sketch entitled "Vicissitudes in the Life of a Princess of the House of Brunswick." It is on the incidents related in that narrative that the foregoing tale is founded. They are given on the authority of M. Bossu, a French officer, whose travels in Louisiana are well known and much esteemed, and who must have been made acquainted with those facts whilst in that province. The English author adds: "Every reader of this anecdote must judge for himself as to the degree of credence he is willing to give to it." The story gained so much ground during the latter part of the eighteenth century that the Russian Government put forth an official statement for the purpose of contradicting and disproving it. Cox, in his history of Russia, dwells at some length on the subject, and so does l'Evêque, the French historian. They both quote the Imperial Manifesto, which states that the Czar Peter was at St. Petersburg at the time of the princess's death, and that shortly before she expired he had an interview with her, the details of which they give. It also denies that the Comtesse de Konigsmark was ever in Russia. Voltaire, in one of his letters, speaks of the supposed Princess as of an adventuress, who was, he says, an Englishwoman of the name of Sophia Donaldson, and who turned to account, in carrying on her alleged imposture, a strong personal resemblance to the wife of the Czarovitch. He says, she appeared at Wolfenbützel some years after the prince's death, and claimed to

be received as his widow and the sister of the reigning duke, but that she was sent away from the duchy, and a sum of money privately given to her, which latter circumstance does not seem quite in keeping with the assumption that her claim was an imposture. St. Simon mentions, in the 26th volume of his memoirs, the fact of the princess's death, which, he says, was caused by a violent blow from her husband when she was pregnant.

He adds that her beauty, her virtues, and her accomplishments would have deserved a happier fate, but makes no allusion to the story related by M. Bossu. It is probable, however, supposing it to be true, that it would not have been rumoured in Europe until a period subsequent to the one in which St. Simon wrote, and even not till some time after his death. In the annual register for 1777, the same narrative is given with some variations and additional circumstances, which do not bear any appearance of truth.

VICISSITUDES IN THE LIFE OF A PRINCESS OF THE HOUSE OF BRUNSWICK.

BY LORD DOVER.

"ABOUT the year 1760, there lived in the city of Brussels, in great retirement, an old lady, who bore the name of Madame d'Auban. She was much occupied in observances of religion, as well as in extensive charities to the poor of her neighbourhood, who regarded her as their benefactress. She had passed some years in this circle of duties,

unnoticed by the great or the gay, and apparently without connections or relatives. Yet none in that city were born of higher lineage, or wedded to greater hopes; nor had any other of its inhabitants probably endured so great a variety of prosperity and adversity, and of romantic changes of fortune, which almost exceed the bounds of credibility.

"Lewis Rodolphus, Duke of Brunswick Wolfenbüttel, married Christina Louisa, Princess of Oettingen, who bore him three daughters. The eldest, Elizabeth Wilhelmina, married Charles the Sixth, Emperor of Germany, and slumbered through a tranquil life of Austrian precision and etiquette. Far different was the lot of her youngest * sister, the Princess Charlotte Sophia; though she also was destined to marry into an imperial house. On the twenty-fifth day of October, 1711, she became the ill-fated wife of Alexis Petrowitz, Prince of Russia, the eldest son of Peter the Great. The marriage took place at Torgau, in Germany, and the young bridegroom was in the twenty-second year of his age. The czarowitz was a man of ferocious manners, and his habits of debauchery had greatly increased his natural brutality. He is also said to have taken a violent aversion to his unhappy wife, and to have attempted no less than three different times to poison her. Happily, the Princess, upon all these occasions, received such speedy succour, that her life was preserved. But the ill-treatment she received from her barbarous husband continued to increase. Nor was there any one at this time at the court of Russia who could control the violences and the outrages of the czarowitz, as Peter the Great and the zarina. Catherine were occupied in visiting foreign countries.

"At length, one day, when the Princess was eight months gone with child, her husband attacked her with greater fury than ever, knocked her down, kicked her while she lay on the ground, and left her bathed in blood. He then set off for one of his country houses, without deigning to make any further inquiries respecting his unhappy victim. The consequence of the ill-treatment

she had received was a premature labour, which her attendants determined to take advantage of, to deliver the Princess for ever from the hands of her unworthy husband. They therefore sent a courier to him, to inform him of her death. The czarowitz returned for answer, an order for her immediate interment as privately as possible, hoping by speed and secrecy to prevent the public from becoming aware of the manner in which he had behaved towards her.

"The funeral of the Princess accordingly took place, but her coffin only contained a log of wood. In the meanwhile, and whilst all the courts of Europe were wearing mourning for her supposed decease, she had escaped from the palace in which she usually resided.

"The Countess Konigsmark, who had been one of the mistresses of Augustus the Second, King of Poland, and was the mother by him of the celebrated Maréchal de Saxe, was at this time at the court of the Princess of Russia. It was to her assistance and management that the princess principally owed her escape. She collected for her whatever of money or of jewels could be found in the palace; gave her an old and trustworthy man-servant of her own, who spoke French and German, to accompany her, and one of her own *femmes-de-chambre*. Thus attended, the Princess set off for Paris, where she arrived without accident. Fearing, however, lest she might be recognized in that capital, she determined to go to America. With this view she went to l'Orient, from which port the vessels belonging to the company of the Indies, to whom the king had conceded the right of colonizing Louisiana, otherwise called the Mississippi, were accustomed to sail.

"The Princess embarked in a packet with eight hundred other Germans, who were on their way to the newly-settled colony. Her faithful servant, who passed on board the vessel for her father, and her maid, still accompanied her. She arrived in safety at the place of her destination. The appearance of the young and beautiful stranger in this wild colony excited universal admiration. The Chevalier d'Auban, an officer of merit, who at that time resided in the colony, and who had formerly been at Petersburg soliciting an employment in the Russian service, saw

* The second Princess of Brunswick, Antonetta Amelia, married Ferdinand Albert, Duke of Brunswick-Bevern.

and recognized the Princess. At first he could hardly believe the testimony of his eyes; but after seeing her frequently, and examining attentively her air, her countenance, and her features, he could no longer doubt that the obscure exile was the same person whom he had formerly beheld surrounded by a brilliant court. He had the prudence not to confide his discovery to any one; but feeling a natural interest in the fortunes of so illustrious an exile, he contrived to acquire the intimacy and confidence of her old and faithful servant, who has been already mentioned.

"At length the old man confided to him, that he and his family were desirous of making a settlement on the banks of the Mississippi, for which purpose he had brought with him a sufficient sum of money; and he proposed at the same time to the chevalier to unite his fortunes with theirs in the undertaking. D'Auban accepted with readiness, joined his funds to those of the strangers, and undertook the management of the whole concern; for which, from his habits of business, he was peculiarly well qualified. The chevalier thus acquired the opportunity of seeing the Princess daily, of exerting himself with zeal in her service, and of showing her upon all occasions the most respectful attachment and devotion.

"One day, when he found himself alone with her, he could no longer resist telling her the secret which he had discovered. He fell at her feet, and acknowledged that he knew her. This avowal at first caused the Princess no less surprise than pain; but after a time she became reassured, from reflecting upon the prudence and attachment which she had witnessed in the chevalier. She therefore contented herself with thanking him for his previous kindness, and making him enter into a solemn engagement that he would keep her secret inviolably.

"Some time after this occurrence, the European newspapers which arrived at New Orleans brought accounts of the catastrophe and death of the czarowitz. The Princess, who was civilly dead in Europe, and who besides was happy in the obscure but tranquil situation in which fate had now placed her, preferred remaining in the New World,

and leaving her friends and relatives in the Old ignorant of her existence. At length she had the misfortune to lose her faithful servant, who had followed her over more than half the globe.

"His death overwhelmed the Princess with grief: she felt at first as if she had lost her only friend. But the redoubled zeal and activity of the Chevalier d'Auban, who now undertook the entire management of her affairs, enabled her to struggle through her difficulties. The respectful tenderness of the feelings which the chevalier entertained for her had also not escaped her. He seemed but to exist for the purpose of furthering and executing her wishes, almost before they were formed in her own breast. He treated her at the same time with the homage due to a sovereign, while his whole life was spent in striving to make her forget her sorrows, and in procuring for her whatever comforts or pleasures that wild region afforded.

"His merits, his capacity, and his zeal, at length touched the heart of the Princess, and she became his wife. And thus was united to a captain of infantry, in a country peopled with negroes, and in the midst of the savage natives, a princess, born herself of a sovereign house, the widow of the heir of one of the vastest empires of the world, and the sister of the Empress of Germany. The newly-married couple lived happily, and struggled contentedly through all the difficulties which must accompany a residence in a newly-settled country. The Princess did not disdain to assist her husband in the labours of the establishment. Time passed rapidly away, and Heaven blessed their union with a daughter, whom Madame d'Auban nursed herself, and to whom she taught her own language, German.

"After some years of tranquil happiness, passed in the manner here described, the Chevalier d'Auban was attacked with a disorder which required surgical aid. He therefore sold his property in Louisiana, and came to Paris, with the view of obtaining it. Madame d'Auban nursed her husband with the tenderest affection. During the convalescence of the chevalier, she sometimes went with her daughter to walk in the gardens of the Tuileries. One day, as she was talking German to her, the Count de Saxe, who was

passing along the same walk, and who was attracted by the sound of his native language, approached them. What was his surprise, on recognizing in the elder of the two strangers the Princess of Russia, whom he, with the rest of the world, had imagined to have died many years before.

"Madame d'Auban, upon his discovering to her that he knew her, implored him to guard her secret; and then related to him in what manner the Countess Konigsmark had favoured her escape from Petersburg. The Count de Saxe promised what she wished with regard to the world in general; but informed her, that he should feel it his duty to state the circumstance to the King of France. The Princess then entreated him, at all events, not to make the disclosure for the space of three months. The count consented to this; and then demanded the permission to come and see her; to which she agreed, on condition that he would only come at night, and alone.

"In the meanwhile the Chevalier d'Auban had recovered his health, but found his means of subsistence nearly exhausted. He solicited and obtained from the French East India Company the situation of major of the Island of Bourbon. The Count de Saxe paid visits from time to time to the Princess; and at length, when the three months were expired, he went to her house, in order to inform her that the time was now arrived when he intended to mention her name to the king. Upon arriving at her lodging, he was much astonished to find that she had set off, with her husband and her daughter, for the Island of Bourbon.

"The Count de Saxe went immediately to the king, and told him the whole story. The king sent in consequence for his minister, and ordered him to write to the governor of Bourbon, desiring him to treat Madame d'Auban with the greatest respect and attention. His majesty also wrote, with his own hand, a letter to the Queen of Hungary, though he was at that time at war with that sovereign, to give her information respecting the fate of her aunt. The queen returned an answer of thanks to the king, and sent him a letter, to be forwarded to Madame d'Auban, in which she entreated her to come to her, and to

leave her husband and daughter, for whom the King of France would provide.

"This offer the Princess at once and peremptorily refused. She remained in the Island of Bourbon until the year 1754, when, having become a widow, and having also lost her daughter, she returned to Paris. From thence she went to Brussels, where she remained till her death, in extreme old age; subsisting upon a pension of sixty thousand florins (given her by the House of Brunswick), of which she devoted three-fourths to objects of charity and benevolence."

PART I. CHAPTER I.

Translation of a letter from the Père Rasles, Missionary in the Nouvelle France, to his nephew.

"THE village of Narantsouak, where I live, is situated on the banks of a river which flows into the sea at about thirty leagues distance from it. I have built here a neat and well-ornamented church. I have spared no pains to make every thing belonging to the Divine service handsome and suitable. The vestments, chasubles, chalices, &c., are all such as would be admired in Europe. I have formed a body of forty young savages, to whom I assign various functions. Some sing in the choir, some serve at mass and benediction, a great number of Indians come even considerable distances to join in our processions. You would be surprised to see how well they behave, and how pious they are.

"Two chapels have been built, at three hundred steps from the village; one is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and contains her Image, the other, further down the stream, is dedicated to the Angel Guardians. We have always a great abundance of lights at all the services. The green wax which is made out of the bays of a particular sort of laurel, which grows abundantly in this part of the country, enables us to do this with great facility. As these chapels are on the road which leads to the woods and to the fields, the savages always stop a moment on their way as they pass them to say a prayer. There is a holy rivalry between the women of the village as to who shall decorate and embellish

most their nearest chapel on the days of the processions. They devote to this object their jewels, their richest stuffs . . . All my converts came twice a day to church; very early in the morning to hear mass, and for night prayers, which we say at the hour of sunset. As it is necessary to fix the imaginations of the savages, who are easily distracted, I have composed prayers and hymns which they repeat or sing during the holy sacrifice of the mass, and which instruct them how to enter into its spirit. Besides regular sermons on Sundays and holydays, I give them on most days a short instruction to warn them against their most habitual temptations, and strengthen them in the practice of virtue. After mass I teach the catechism to the young people and children; a great many adults attend it and answer my questions with great docility. The rest of the morning till twelve o'clock, is devoted to speaking with all those who come to see me for various reasons. They confide to me their sorrows and difficulties, or tell me their grievances, or consult me about their marriages and other affairs. I have to instruct, to comfort, to mediate, to calm uneasy consciences, to reprove in some cases, and, in short, to work hard at sending them all away in good dispositions. In the afternoon I visit the sick, or instruct in their cabins those who particularly need it. If a council is held, which is often the case, in the village, I am deputed to preside at it, and requested to assist at its deliberations. I approve or dissent from their resolutions as needs be, and I find them always ready to adhere to my advice. When they give a feast they send for me to say grace. The guests bring a wooden platter, in which their share of good things is placed, and they carry it away with them. This is the mode of entertaining in this part of the world.

"In the midst of these incessant occupations, you can scarcely imagine how quickly time goes by. At one time I could not find time to say my office or to sleep, for even in the night the savages, who do not excel in the virtue of discretion, invaded continually my hut. But some years ago I made it a rule not to speak to any one after night prayers, until after mass the next morning,

and I absolutely forbade everybody to disturb me during those hours unless for some sufficient reason, such as a person's dangerous illness, or an affair that did not brook delay. I am now, therefore, generally able to devote those hours to prayer and repose.

"When the savages go on their fishing or hunting expeditions, they build for me with logs and pieces of bark a temporary chapel and hut in the neighbourhood of their haunts; and we perform our religious services with the same reverence and the same numerous attendance as when at home. This, my dear nephew, is a sketch of my mode of life. As to myself, I can only say that I see nothing but savages, and hear and speak nothing but their language. My food is very simple. I have never been able to accustom myself to their way of dressing meat and fish, so that I never eat any thing but maize, which I make into a kind of paste by boiling it and sweetening it with the syrup of the maple tree, which grows in abundance in this country, and produces sugar almost as good as that of the sugar canes."*

PART I. CHAPTER II.

"SIMON, with a few hirelings, was come from the Illinois, and had been waiting for us for two or three months. Simon is a bargeman from the Mission of the Illinois. They call here *hirelings* (*engagés*), the men who hire themselves out to row a barge or a boat, and one might add, to try the patience of those they convey."†

PART I. CHAPTER VI.

The following extract from Thackeray's "Four Georges" gives evidence of the system of religious, or rather non-religious, system of education, prevalent in the northern courts of Germany in the last century.

"It was the first Elector of Hanover who made the fortunate marriage which bestowed the race of Hanoverian sovereigns upon us Britons. Nine years after Charles Stuart lost his head, his niece Sophia, one of many chil-

* *Lettres curieuses et édifiantes*, 6th volume, page 127.

† *Lettres curieuses et édifiantes*, 6th volume.

dren of another luckless dethroned sovereign, the Elector Palatine, married Ernest Augustus of Brunswick, and brought the reversion of the crown of the three kingdoms in her scanty trousseau. One of the handsomest, the most cheerful, sensible, shrewd, accomplished of women was Sophia, daughter of Frederick the winter, King of Bohemia. The other daughters of lovely Elizabeth Stuart went off into the Catholic Church; this one, luckily for her family, remained, I cannot say faithful to the Protestant religion, but at least she adopted no other. An agent of the French king's, Gourville, a convert himself, strove to bring her and her husband to a sense of the truth, and tells us that he one day asked Madame, the Duchess of Hanover, of what religion her daughter was, then a pretty girl of thirteen years old. The duchess replied that the princess *was of no religion as yet*. They were waiting to know of what religion her husband would be, Protestant or Catholic, before instructing her. This daughter, of whose early education we have made mention, was married to the Elector of Brandenburg, and so her religion settled finally on the Protestant side.

"It must be told to the honour of Catherine of Anspach (who afterwards married George II.), that at a time when German princes thought as little of changing their religion than you of altering your caps, she refused to give up Protestantism for the other creed, although an archduke, afterwards to be an emperor, was offered to her for a bridegroom. Her Protestant relations in Berlin were angry at her rebellious spirit. It was they who tried to convert her!"

PART I. CHAPTER VI.

As it is not unreasonable to suppose that the same customs and habits prevailed in the Court of Russia during the earlier part of the century, as existed at the time of the Empress Catherine's arrival in that country in the year 1744, a few extracts from her journal are given, in order to show to what trials a young princess, born and educated in a more civilized country, would have been likely to endure in that semi-barbarous court.

Ten days after her arrival at St. Peters-

burgh, the young Princess Sophia Augusta Frederica of Anhalt-Zerbst-Bernbourg, the betrothed bride of Peter, Duke of Holstein, the heir to the throne, nephew of the reigning Empress Elizabeth, and grandson of Peter the Great, writes as follows: "I have now three masters to instruct me. Simon Theodorsky teaches me the Greek religion; Basil Adadouroff the Russian language; and Laudet, the ballet-master, dancing." A few days later the princess falls dangerously ill. Her mother, who had accompanied her to the Court of Russia, wishes her to see a Lutheran clergyman, but the future empress objects, sends for a Greek priest, and makes the following remark, with reference to this stroke of policy:—"Simon Theodorsky came, and we conversed in everybody's hearing in a way which gave general satisfaction. This brought me into great favour with the empress and all the court."

A few pages on she mentions the advice which she receives from one of the few friends who appears to have taken any interest in her during the months which preceded her marriage. "Count Gillembourg (she writes) was a very clever man, rather old, and highly esteemed by my mother. I had reason to be grateful to him, for when we had seen him at Hamburg he noticed how little my mother cared for me, and he told her she was wrong, and that I was wise beyond my years. He informed me I had a philosophical turn of mind, and when he came to St. Petersburg he enquired how my philosophy thrived in the midst of the whirlwind I lived in. I told him how I employed my time in my own room; learning the Russian language, playing on the pianoforte, and reading all the books I could buy." He said that a philosopher of fifteen years of age could have but little self-knowledge; and that, surrounded as I was by numberless shoals, unless my soul was of a very superior order, I must infallibly be shipwrecked, and that I must strengthen my soul by the best possible course of reading, for which purpose he recommended me to get Plutarch's "Lives of Great Men," "Cicero's Life," and Montesquieu's "History of the Greatness and the Decline of the Roman Empire." I immediately sent for those books, which I found

it very difficult to procure at St. Petersburg."

Immediately after the Princess's marriage she finds out that spies are set about her. When she wishes to speak to one of her bed-chamber women, she notices her affright:

"For God's sake, madam," the attendant says, "do not say any thing to me. We have received strict orders never to speak with you in a low voice, or but in the presence of the first woman in waiting." One of these attendants, the cheerfulness of whose disposition had cheered her mistress, who was in very low spirits at her mother's final departure from Russia, and the brutal and disgusting conduct of her youthful husband, disappears one day. The Princess asks for her. She is given to understand that Mademoiselle Toukoff is gone to see her sick mother. The empress tells her the next day that she is dismissed and is on her way to Moscow. And when the Princess endeavours to soften her disgrace by promoting the marriage of Mademoiselle Toukoff with an officer of the Guards, both are banished to Siberia. From that moment forward the least sign of confidence in or of preference for any person of her household proved the signal for an instant dismissal. The discomforts endured by the Princess of Anhalt show what must have been those experienced by the Princess of Wolfenbuttel forty years before.

"Our mode of travelling," she says, "was wretched and disagreeable. The stations and post-houses were occupied by the empress. We had tents put up for us, or were sometimes lodged in the servant's offices. I remember having to dress one day near an oven, where bread had just been baked; and another time that in the tent where my bed was placed water was an inch deep. There were no fixed hours either for rest or for meals, and we were often tired almost to death. I felt miserably lonely, and my spirits were deplorable. I had recourse to books. Since my marriage I was always reading. Novels at first, but I got tired of them. Then I fell in with Madame de Sévigné's letters, which amused me; and then with Voltaire's works, which I read from beginning to end." When the Princess's father died, she took it naturally to heart, and cried a good deal.

At the end of eight days she got a message from the empress to say that her imperial majesty requested her to leave off crying, for that her father was not a king, and she had wept quite long enough. "True," the Princess answered, "he was not a king, but he was my father." To which the lady-in-waiting replied, "It is not befitting that a grand duchess should weep for more than eight days for a father who was not a king." She was forbidden to write herself to her mother, for the letters of a grand duchess of Russia were to be composed by the Council for Foreign Affairs, and she had only to sign them. When she begged to mention what she wished to be said in these letters, it was pointed out to her that the council knew better than she did what it was proper for her to write. She says again later, "I had been for many years forbidden to write to my mother." The moral and physical sufferings endured at that formal but uncivilized court seem to have been on a par. The following account testifies to the latter class of miseries:—

"This year we lodged in a new wing, built of wood, and so damp that the water was running down the walls. In the chamber called my dressing-room, my ladies and maids of honour and their waiting-maids were all lodged, so that there were seventeen women and girls sleeping in one room, which had three windows, but no entrance or exit but through my bed-room. The misery and discomfort of this arrangement was intolerable. I do not know how those seventeen women crowded in one room, and some of them ill, did not breed a fever. The smell was dreadful, and my room so full, in consequence, of vermin of all sorts, that I could not sleep."

Another of the habitations for a while occupied by the grand duke and grand duchess is thus described:—

"We received orders to remove to the bishop's house. This was a very old house, built of wood, with no look-out at all. The stones were so old and so full of holes that one could see the fire through them, and the rooms so filled with smoke that it hurt our eyes. There was only a wooden staircase, and the windows high above the ground. One was liable to be burnt to death in this

abode. Three times it caught fire during the time we lived in it; I caught on one of these occasions a sore throat and fever. The Austrian ambassador noticed one day the redness of my eyes, and asked me if I had been crying. He was not mistaken. Ennui, ill health, and the amount of moral and physical misery I was subjected to, effectually depressed my spirits."

In support of the account given in the 17th chapter of the foregoing work, of the isolation and neglect to which etiquette and courtly indifference consigned a Russian princess in the eighteenth century, and of the separation from her children, which the same absolute rules enforced, the following extracts are adduced:—

"In the month of August, we returned to the summer palace. It was a mortal blow to me when I heard that the rooms I was to occupy at the time of my confinement, were those adjoining to the empress's apartments. Alexander Shouvaloff took me to see them. I found two rooms, with only one entrance, dull, like all those of the summer palace, with hangings of crimson damask, but hardly any furniture, or comforts of any kind. I saw I should be isolated, without any sort of society, and as unhappy as possible. I mentioned this to Serge Soltikoff and to Princess Gagarine, who did not like each other, but, being both much attached to me, were, on that one point, united; but they agreed there was nothing to be done. I was taken ill in the night of the following Tuesday, and Madame Vladislava sent for the midwife, and woke the grand duke and Count Alexander Shouvaloff, who went to give notice to the empress, who came to my room at two o'clock in the morning. After great sufferings, I was brought to bed at about twelve o'clock, A.M. As soon as my son was born and dressed, the empress sent for her confessor, who gave him the name of Paul. Then she told the midwife to take the child and to follow her. I remained on my bed of suffering. This bed was standing between a door, through which I could see the light, and two great windows, which shut badly. On the right side was a door opening into my dressing-room; and on the left, one leading to Madame Vladislava's room. As soon as the empress had left, the

grand duke went away too; and so did M. and Madame Shouvaloff; and nobody came near me till three o'clock. I entreated Madame Vladislava to move me into my own bed, but she said she could not venture to do so on her own authority. She sent several times for the midwife but she did not come. I asked for something to drink and received the same answer. At last, at three o'clock, the Countess Shouvaloff arrived in full dress, having made a grand toilette. When she saw me lying in the same place where she had left me, she made a great exclamation, and said it was enough to kill me. This was very consoling for me, who had been, as it was, crying bitterly since the moment of my confinement, and especially at the utter neglect with which I was treated; lying on a hard couch after horrible sufferings, between doors and windows that did not shut, nobody daring to help me into my bed, and without strength to stir alone. Madame Shouvaloff went away, and half-an-hour afterwards the midwife came. She said the empress was so taken up with the child that she would not let her go for a moment. As to me, I was not thought of at all. I was dying of thirst. At last I was moved into my bed; and, during the rest of the day, not a single creature came near me or sent to inquire after me. The empress never left the child, and the grand duke did nothing but drink with his companions. The city and country were, meanwhile, rejoicing over my son's birth. The next day I was seized with violent rheumatic pains, and I could not sleep, and had a high fever. Still nobody took any heed of me. The grand duke came into my room for a minute, and went away, saying he had not time to remain. I did nothing but moan and weep. Madame Vladislava was the only person I saw, and she was sorry for me, I know. But she could do nothing, and I could not endure to be pitied. My pride forbade me from avowing how wretched I was.

"On the sixth day, my son was baptized. He had been very near dying of croup. I could only have news of him by stealth, for to inquire openly after his health would have been considered as a proof of want of confidence in the empress, who had taken charge of him, and it would have given great offence.

She kept him in her own room, and whenever he cried she used half to suffocate him by her excess of care. In a very hot room, he was kept in swaddling-clothes made of flannel, in a cradle lined with black fur, and covered with a counterpane of pink satin, lined with wadding, and another one above it of pink velvet, lined with black fur. I have seen him smothered in this way, with the drops of sweat streaming down his face; the consequence of which was, that when he grew older the least breath of air gave him cold. Besides that, he was surrounded by a bevy of ignorant old crones, who, by dint of their senseless modes of management, injured him both physically and morally. At the end of forty days, the empress came to my room again for my churching. I had risen to receive her, but seeing how pale and weak I was, she made me sit down, whilst her confessor read the prayers. My son had been brought into the room. *It was the first time I had seen him since his birth.* I thought him very handsome, and the sight of him cheered me a little. But no sooner were the prayers finished than the empress had him carried away, and went away herself. From Christmas to Lent there was no end of dinners, balls, masquerades, illuminations, and fire-works, the finest in the world, in honour of my son's birth. I pretended to be ill in order not to be present at any of them . . . After Easter, we went to Orianenbaum. Before we left St. Petersburg, the empress permitted me to see my son for the third time since his birth. I found him in that suffocating heat I have already described (the child was then six months old)."

Some years afterwards the princess wrote a letter to the Empress Elizabeth, in which she says—"That she earnestly entreats her majesty to put an end to her misery by sending her back to her family. That, as she never was able to see her children although living under the same roof, it did not signify whether she remained in the same house, or was a hundred leagues away from them. That she was aware the empress took much better care of them than she could have done; and that she therefore craved permission to spend the rest of her life in her native country, praying for her majesty, the grand duke,

her children, her friends, and her enemies, for that constraint and sorrow had impaired her health, so as to put her life in danger." Whether or not this letter was a sincere expression of feeling on the part of the Princess of Anhalt, it gives some idea of the sufferings she had experienced. In relating a conversation which she held about that time with Count Woronzoff, and in which he tried to persuade her not to seek to leave Russia, she says:—"He spoke of my children. I told him I never saw them. That since my churching I had not seen my second daughter. That I was not allowed to do so without a special order from the empress, near whose room they were lodged. That I had no doubt she took great care of them, but that being deprived of the happiness of seeing them, it did not signify if I lived in the same place as they did or not. About this time the princess mentions that she went to communion in order to show her attachment to the Greek religion." The whole of the curious volume from which these extracts are taken exhibits the melancholy influence of a corrupt court, a depraved entourage, a state religion, a ridiculous etiquette, and a disgusting admixture of luxury and barbarism, on the character of a young person who, at fourteen, was endowed with a natural love of virtue, an amiable disposition, an inclination, as she herself states, to piety, and an ambition which might have been directed to high and good objects.*

What it was directed to, the sequel of her history evinced. The reign of the Empress Catherine is the moral of this story. The sufferings and the trials which gradually depraved and corrupted her were probably not dissimilar to those which drove the Princess of Wolfenbuttel from the palace of the czar to the wilds of the new world; or, if our legend of modern history be rejected, broke her heart, and consigned her to an early grave in the flower of her youth.

PART I. CHAPTER VIII.

For historical evidence of the horrible cruelties exercised by the Czar Peter on his rebellious subjects; of his treatment of his wife and sister, whom he condemned to the

* *Mémoires de l'Impératrice Catherine II. écrit, par elle même et précédé d'une préface par A. Herzen.*

punishment of the knout; of the barbarities, startling beyond any thing recorded of the most heathen emperors, which he inflicted on the revolted Strelitz; of his personal brutal violence towards his victims, and the insults

with which he aggravated their sufferings; of his coarse buffoonery and cynical impiety the reader is referred to the recently-published diary of an Austrian. Secretary of Legation at the Court of St. Petersburg.

PART SECOND.

PART II. CHAPTER II.

"AFTER forty days march we arrived at the first village of the Illinois. On the next day I was invited by the principal chief to a great feast, to meet the most important personages of the tribe. When all the guests were arrived, they sat down in rows round the hut on the ground, or some of them on mats. Then the chief rose and began his speech. I own to you that I was struck with astonishment at the fluency of his language, the strength and justice of his reasoning, the eloquent turn of his sentences, the choice and the delicacy of his expressions. I am persuaded that had I been able to write down what this savage said, without preparation and at the impulse of the moment, you would have acknowledged that the cleverest European, with study and care, could not have composed a better speech, both as to matter and as to language."*

PART II. CHAPTER II.

Extract from "l'Histoire Générale de la Nouvelle France," on the subject of the Insurrection of the Natches in the year 1729.

"THE governor-general, without being aware of it, was on the point of seeing the colony destroyed by enemies he did not fear, and allies on which he fancied he could rely—who were, in fact, our great support, but who had been tempted to betray us. . . . There was not a single French habitation secure

* Lettres curieuses et édifiantes, 6th volume, page 176.

from a sudden surprise. In a few places there were forts, but in general they were only defended by rows of half-rotted wooden palings; which, had they been in a better state, could only have protected the habitations in their immediate neighbourhood. The security was so general, that the savages could easily have massacred the French even in the best-protected localities, as happened at the Natches in the way I am about to relate. M. de Chépar had had a slight quarrel with this tribe, but they had contrived, however, to persuade him that the French had not more sincere allies. So little did he apprehend the reverse, that when a rumour was set afloat that the Natches were plotting against us, he ordered into prison seven French colonists who had asked his permission to arm themselves and organize a system of defence. He received at that very time thirty savages within the fort, and as many in his own house and neighbourhood. They were mixed up everywhere with the French—in the workmen's huts, and the habitations scattered round the village.

"A day had meanwhile been fixed for the general massacre, but two circumstances induced the Natches to hasten it. First, the arrival of large stores of merchandise, which had just arrived at the fort, and which excited their cupidity; the second was, that the commander had several colonists staying with him, and that, on pretext of seeking game to offer him for the entertainment of his guests, they could arm themselves without exciting suspicion. The commandant gladly accepted their proposal, and they went about buying

guns and powder, ostensibly for the use of the hunters.

"On the morning of the appointed day, they dispersed themselves amongst the various habitations, announcing that they were going into the woods for this famous hunting party; and took care so to arrange, that in each habitation they should be in greater number than the French. They smoked the calumet in honour of the commander and his guests, and then went each to his post. A moment afterwards three guns were fired close to M. Chépar's house. This was the signal of the massacre. The Natches fell everywhere on the French. The commander and his guests—amongst whom were Messrs. Kolf and his sons—were amongst the first killed. There was no struggle, except in the habitation of M. de la Loire des Ursins, where eight Frenchmen were staying. There was some hard fighting; eight of the Natches were killed, and six Frenchmen; two escaped. M. de la Loire was just riding out on horseback; at the report of the first gun he turned back, and was assailed by a troop of savages, against which he fought some time, but at last fell, covered with wounds, after having killed four Natches. So twelve of the savages perished. But that was all their loss at the time of the massacre.

"Before proceeding to the execution of their design, they had secured the coöperation of some of the negroes. They persuaded them that they would be delivered from slavery by the savages; that our women and children would be the slaves; and, that they need have no fear of the French in other places, as the massacre would take place simultaneously all over the country. It appears, however, that the plot was only made known to a few, for fear of discovery. Two hundred Frenchmen died on this occasion; a hundred and fifty children, eighty women, and as many negroes, were made prisoners. Father Poissan, a Jesuit, and M. de Codère, the governor at the Yasous, who happened to be at the Natches, perished also. The former was going on some business from his missions at the Arkansas to New Orleans. He arrived on the 26th, rather late in the evening, at the Natches, meaning to set off again on the next day immediately after say-

ing mass. However, as the priest of the mission was absent, Father Poissan was entreated to sing high mass and to preach on the next day, as it was the first Sunday in Advent. He agreed to do so. In the evening, as he was about to depart, he was told that several sick and dying persons were wishing to see him. He consented to put off his journey, and visited them all, administering the last sacrament to the dying, and carrying holy communion to the sick. He was just coming out of a cabin where he had been accomplishing this act of charity when an Indian chief threw himself upon him, and struck him with a hatchet. At the same moment M. de Codère, who was hurrying to his assistance, was killed by a gun-shot, and the savage completed the murder. During the massacre the great Sun, or chief, of the Natches was sitting quietly under a shed, and the heads of the Frenchmen were brought to him and laid at his feet. They only spared two Frenchmen, a tailor and a carpenter, whom they thought might be of use to them. They killed some of the women, but the most part of them were kept as slaves, and treated with great cruelty.

"The news of the massacres, which broke out in several places at once, was carried to New Orleans by the Père Dautrelean, missionary at the Illinois, who had taken advantage of the hunting season, when the Indians leave their villages to encamp in the woods, to go to New Orleans on business. He wished to say mass at Father Souel's mission, not knowing that he had been murdered a few days before, but, finding he could not reach his residence till twelve o'clock, he determined to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice on the banks of the river. A number of savages joined him and his companions, and offered them some provisions. When mass began they placed themselves behind the French, as if wishing to assist at it. At the moment the priest was saying the 'Kyrie Eleison' they fired upon him, and wounded him in the right arm. Seeing one of his companions fall dead at his feet, the Father knelt down and prepared to receive his death-blow. But the savages having fired upon him two or three times without effect, although close to him, it struck him he might yet escape. Still

in his vestments, and carrying the chalice and the palena in his hands, he rushed towards the boat. The two other Frenchmen had already reached it, and, believing him to be dead, had pulled away from the shore. He threw himself into the water, and they contrived to pull him into the boat. Turning round to see if he was pursued, he received in his mouth several shots from the gun of an Indian. They struck chiefly against his teeth; some of them entered his gums. He undertook, in spite of his wounded arm, to steer the boat; and his two companions—one of whom had the thigh shattered with a gun-shot—rowed with all their might. The savages pursued them for an hour, firing continually upon them, but without effect. The two rowers were often about to give up, but, encouraged by the priest, kept on, and managed to keep the Indians at bay by pointing towards them an old unloaded fowling-piece which had been lying at the bottom of the boat. When they came near the Natches, not knowing what had happened there, they wished to land, but the sight of ruined and smoking habitations put them on their guard, and they pushed farther on, though well-nigh exhausted. At last they fell in with a detachment of French troops, which was marching against the Natches. The surgeon who was with them dressed their wounds, and after a short repose they went on to New Orleans.

"On January 27, M. le Sueur, a French officer, who, on hearing of the massacre, had been recruiting amongst the friendly tribe of the Choctaws, marched with 700 men of that nation to the Natches. He expected to have met the French troops there, but they had not yet arrived, and he could not restrain the impetuosity of the Choctaws. They charged the enemy with such impetuosity that they killed eighty men, made sixteen women prisoners, and delivered from captivity fifty-one French women, the two men the Natches had spared, and a hundred and fifty negroes and negroes. If the negroes had all been on the side of the French, or the French troops had arrived, the Natches would have met the same fate then as awaited them at a later period."

PART II. CHAPTER IV.

IN the court of this young monarch (Louis XV.) many intrigues were carried on. People wondered that a king of twenty years of age had not yet given his heart to any of the titled beauties who were coveting its possession. Such was the spirit which the regency had fostered, and a regular plot was formed to seduce Louis XV. from his allegiance to his queen. His courtiers were tired of the sight of his conjugal virtues, and of his devotion to Marie Leckzinska. They laughed at his constancy—they used every art to constrain him to be unfaithful to her. For some time the king resisted. To those who spoke to him in praise of other women he used to say, "The queen is to my mind handsomer; I like her better than any of those women who flutter about me." But these perverse efforts were unceasing; the court turned the young couple into ridicule; the king began to wonder that he was not as profligate as those about him. It would have required a very strong character to stem the tide of that dissolute period and that corrupt society. When the queen had had five children, and had begun to lose her youthful bloom, the assaults on the king's heart, or rather his fancy, redoubled. All the young lords of the court, from the Duc de Richelieu to the Dukes of Epermon and Gesvres, plotted to lead him into vice; and before long the young Duchesse de Mailly assumed the position at the French Court which Madame de Montespan had so long held in the preceding reign.*

PART II. CHAPTER V.

"As I have mentioned Poupponne, I must tell you we are in a state of great excitement. Athalie is going to be acted at her convent. She is to act the part of the queen, and we greatly need your advice, sir. Just fancy that we do not know (that is, I have forgotten it) how Athalie ought to be dressed, when she must stand or when she must sit down, when she must be in a passion or when she must play the hypocrite. All this puzzles us very much. Could not you, in a

* Extract from the history of Louis XV., by Capefigue.

moment of leisure, glance over the tragedy and mark these different points for us?—you would do me a great favour.

"If you keep your promise you will arrive in time to make us rehearse. Pouponne shines in the sentimental parts, so that what she does in her own way, out of her own little head and taste, is a hundred times better than what we teach her. I have just noticed this in the scene which begins 'Te voilà Séducteur!' I was not aware she knew it, and she repeats it better than any thing else. Simple things are what she fails in, such as used to be the triumph of Mdle. Lecouvreur. As to Pouponne, she likes to storm and rave—she is a little Duclas." *

PART II. CHAPTER V.

MAURICE, Comte de Saxe and Marshal of France, was born in Dresden in 1696. He was the illegitimate son of the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, Augustus the Second, and the Countess de Koenigsmark. He entered the army at twelve years of age, learnt the art of war under Prince Eugene, and was present at the siege of Belgrade. He entered the French service in 1720, but soon after went to Courland, where, through the protection of the Dowager Duchess Anna Ivanovna, he was elected Duke; but the Empress Catherine the First would not recognize his election, and he returned to France, where he definitively remained. He greatly distinguished himself in the campaigns of 1733, '34, and '35. He became a Lieutenant-General in 1736, covered himself with glory in the war of the Austrian succession, took Prague and Egra, defended Alsatia, and was named Marshal in 1743. He held the allies in check in Flanders, defeated them at Fontenoy, took Ath and Brussels, won two victories at Rocoux and Lanfeld, and played a decisive part in bringing about the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748. At the conclusion of the war he received from Louis the Fifteenth the domain of Chambord and a revenue of 40,000 francs. The bodily strength of this Prince was astonishing.

* Madame de Shintane's letters, to M. d'Héricourt. She was Madame de Sévigné's granddaughter, and Pouponne was her grandchild.

He could break a six-franc piece in two with his fingers.*

PART II. CHAPTER VI.

Translation of a note in the Appendix of Chateaubriand's tale, "The Natches."

THE banks of the Ohio are peopled with French names which bear witness to the ancient glories of those shores. Indian families boast even now of the alliances formed by their ancestors; and proudly bear the name of Pont Chartrain, of Yberville, and of Termonville.

That of Maurepas is well known in Indian annals, but no gratitude is due from Americans to the memory of this minister. He it was who ordered the sale of the last Natches. The following reflections occur in M. Barbé Marboix's History of Louisiana, regarding this inhuman act of policy:

In the course of the wars between the French and the inhabitants of Louisiana, the conflict with the Natches produced deplorable consequences. This nation was reckoned, before the French conquest, as the most peaceful of the Indian tribes. But, irritated by the tyrannical proceedings of a French commanding officer, it carried into effect a horrible retaliation. In consequence, the governor of the colony deemed it necessary to make a striking example of this people, and the whole tribe was exterminated, with the exception of a few families which escaped the general massacre, and were received and harboured by the neighbouring tribes. From time immemorial the Natches had been governed by a family of chiefs, whom they deemed the children of the sun. M. Perrier, the commander-in-chief, had them all transported to the Cape Français. The head of this dynasty died there soon afterwards. The other Suns were supported for a little while, in a miserable manner, at the expense of the Company. When the syndics wrote to M. de Maurepas, to claim indemnification for this outlay, his answer was, "I do not see what can be done, but to send back what remains of those two Indian families to Louisiana, or to sell them as slaves."

* Dictionnaire Universel, &c.

The archives of the Company contain the following resolution: "It has been decided after mature consideration, to sell as slaves the remaining members of royal families of the Natches." At the same time as this order was given, mention was made of civilizing the nation whose chiefs were to be sold as slaves!

Two of the Natches thus doomed to slavery were sent to France. One of them had been brought up as an attendant on the altar of the Manitou, and had saved from destruction, when the idols were overthrown in North America, a young serpent which he considered as a fetish or charm. He kept it in a bowl and carried it to France with him, trusting that when this Manitou acquired its full strength it would deliver him from slavery.

This Natches landed at Toulon at the time when the famous Mandrin was filling with terror the southern provinces of France. The sailors had told before the young Natches wonderful stories of this smuggler's exploits, and he became persuaded that the white man who so marvellously escaped dangers, must be protected by invisible agencies. He ardently desired to enrol himself amongst the followers of this invincible chief. Having contrived to escape, he wandered about some time living upon alms. After many unsuccessful efforts he succeeded at last in falling in with Rondart, one of the followers of Mandrin and his band. The young savage told the story of his country's destruction, and said the Manitou which he adored had led him amongst the warriors who were the object of his admiration. The singularity of these circumstances struck Mandrin. He saw at once how useful the fanaticism of the young idolater might prove, and encouraged him in his belief. He was given the name of Lohie, a derivation from that of Ohio.

Accustomed to see the prisoners made in war offered up in sacrifice to his gods, the Natches had no remorse in murdering and pillaging, and ascribed to his fetish the successful result of the dangerous expeditions in which he was ever ready to join with superstitious ardour.

Mandrin's band, whilst exploring the Fo-

rez, conceived the project of invading the castle of the High Prévost. A bolder enterprise could not have been conceived or proposed to the courage of the Natches. He accepted with joy the command of this midnight attack. Foreseeing the perilous nature of the attempt he resolved to carry his serpent with him in his breast, feeling certain to triumph through its influence.

When on the spot, Lohie dispersed his band for the attack, and before giving the signal, opened the can in which he carried his serpent, in order to invoke it. The venomous creature who had been painfully compressed in a narrow space, sprung out and fastened on the savage's throat. Lohie could not restrain a cry of pain, and his companions did not dare to touch the serpent so as to disengage him from its hold. The struggles of the wretched man caused his gun to go off. The noise it made gave the alarm; Lohie's troop tried to fly, but the prévost's guards, surrounded them in an instant, and soon disarmed them. The serpent's head was cut off with a sword, but the Natches was by that time at the point of death. He died in horrible sufferings, invoking the idol who had caused his death. Such was the unhappy end of one of the North American slaves.

The other Indian, born in the same region, and brought by the same ship to the shores of France, met with a very different fate. He belonged to the race which claimed descent from the sun. When he left his native land it was noticed that he carried a crucifix in his bosom. When questioned as to this holy sign, he stated that it had been given to him by a dying sachem.

Struck with the peace which had attended the last moments of the Indian Christian, the young Natches had vowed to renounce the worship of idols, and to follow the religion of the God of Truth. The genuine piety which breathed in his touching narrative induced M. Maret, the Prince de Condé's secretary, to deliver him from slavery. Instead of a master he found in him a protector, who naturalized him in the bosom of his new country. He was taken to Paris. In the midst of the wonders of that splendid city it struck people with astonishment to

hear the young savage beg to be conducted to the house of God rather than to the brilliant sights which met his eyes. This wish was expressed at a great assembly which had been called together to witness the introduction of a native of the Louisianian forests into the dazzling atmosphere of Parisian magnificence—into a world altogether new to him. M. de Caylus, Bishop of Auxerre, obtained the privilege of introducing the Indian into the Christian temple, and of instructing him in the Christian religion.

It was in the church of St. Severine in Paris, that he administered the rite of baptism to the young savage. The procureur general of the Parliament, M. Fleu de Henry, was his godfather, and the noble Lady de Senac d'Orgeville his godmother. He took the name of Marie Guillaume. The register of his baptism still exists in the archives of the Parliament of Paris. During the ceremony he kept his head bowed down on the sachel's crucifix. The court and the town crowded to see the North American convert. It was always with deep emotion that he related how the beauty of a Christian death-bed had led him to the true faith. These facts seem almost like a complement of the preceding fictions. Truth is thus linked with the inspirations of a writer who was the first to throw a romantic interest on the history of the Natches. M. de Chateaubriand has endowed this people with the prestige which suffering gives; and these true and touching episodes might form a sequel to his tale.*

PART II. CHAPTER VI.

Extracts from "Mademoiselle Gaultier's Conversion, related by herself, and printed from the manuscript written by her own hand."

THIS narrative has been published in a volume of the Lives of French Carmelite Nuns, and is also to be found in "*Pièces curieuses pour servir à la Littérature et à l'Histoire, par De la Place.*" Mdle. Gaultier was a celebrated French actress, who, after

being ten years on the stage, retired from it and the world, and ended by entering a Carmelite convent, the same where Mdle. de la Vallière had taken the veil in the previous century. Mdle. Gaultier's professional labours at the Théâtre Français had met with success and brought her wealth, and she lavishly indulged in all that wealth can procure. Nature had bestowed upon her many and various gifts. She was endowed with talents for poetry and painting as well as acting. Tall in stature, commanding in appearance, with a brilliant complexion and a graceful figure, she made herself conspicuous wherever she went by a display of the less feminine arts of riding and driving, and few men could boast of strength equal to hers. She once challenged the Comte de Saxe to try the power of his wrists against her own. His strength was proverbial, and no one in Europe had ever been a match for him in this respect. Nor did Mdle. Gaultier come off victorious in the trial she had invited, but her antagonist acknowledged he had never been so nearly defeated. She was able to roll a silver piece in her hand as if it had been a wafer. For many years her life was notorious for its irregularities, and many were the scandals she gave. Her mad freaks were the subject of public conversation; and the following anecdote will exemplify the tone of her mind at that period.

She had been banished from the court of the Grand Duke of Würtemberg on account of the insolence with which she had treated a lady whose influence was great with that sovereign. But no sooner had she arrived in Paris than she resolved not to submit tamely to the insult she had received, but to return at once to Stuttgart, and carry out her revenge. Secreting herself in that town for the purpose, she watched her opportunity. Having ascertained that her enemy was driving in an open carriage on the public promenade, she ordered a pair of fiery horses to be harnessed to a vehicle she had previously hired, and, driving as usual herself, she contrived to run against her rival's equipage and to overset it. No sooner was this done than, leaving the object of her enmity prostrate in the mud, she jumped into a post-chaise which was in waiting, and was on her way to Paris

* The story of René and Atala, and the history of the Natches.

before the Grand Duke had had time to hear of her exploit.

With reference to this journey she writes, "In order to conceive an idea of what the strength and impetuosity of my passions had been, and, the dangers to which I exposed myself when there was a question of satisfying them, just imagine what perils a girl of twenty-two must have run travelling alone from Paris to the kingdom of Würtemberg, and from thence back again to Paris—alone with the footman and the postboy who drove the carriage. This footman, much more tired and more timid than his mistress, used often to come to the door of the chaise, especially when going through the woods of Nancy and St. Menéould; and whisper in broken accents, 'Mademoiselle, do you know that we are in a most cut-throat sort of a place?' I only laughed and said, 'Go on; don't be afraid. You follow Cæsar and his fortunes.'"

"On the 25th of April, 1722, at a time when I was revelling in an ocean of delights, according to the world's pernicious way of thinking, and enjoying a fatal security even whilst compassed about with the shades of death—I happened one morning to awake between eight and nine o'clock, which was earlier than was usual with me. I remembered that it was my birthday, and rang for my women. One of them came hurrying to my bedside, supposing that I had been taken ill. I desired her to get me dressed, as I intended to go to mass. She told me that it was not a festival; for she knew that it was only on days of obligation that I ever thought of such a thing, and then not always. I insisted, however, and she assisted me to dress. I went to the church of the Franciscans, followed only by my footman, and taking with me a little motherless boy whom I had adopted. I heard the first part of Mass without the least attention; but about the time of the Preface an interior voice seemed to say to me, 'What brings you to the foot of the altar? Are you come here to thank God that he has given you the means of pleasing men and mortally offending him every day?' The thought of this my monstrous ingratitude towards the Lord overwhelmed me to such a degree that I cannot describe it. I slipped

off the chair against which I was negligently leaning and fell prostrate on the pavement. When Mass was ended I sent home my footman and the orphan boy, and remained in church in a state of inconceivable agitation.

"I spent six months in this way, hearing Mass every morning and in the evening going on in my usual manner. At last I bethought myself to the words of the Gospel, 'No man can serve two masters,' upon which I made up my mind. At last the day of my departure arrived. It was the very one upon which persons dearest to me in the world were for the last time to dine at my house. But dear to me as they were, my salvation was now dearer to me still. What I suffered whilst at table in order not to betray my feelings can scarcely be conceived. Nature and grace were carrying on a fearful conflict within my heart; especially I was agitated when some one said to me, 'The fare you give us is too good for a Wednesday in Passion Week;' and then they all exclaimed, 'It is because she is taking leave of us.' Feeling myself about to faint, I rose from table, and said I was obliged to go out on account of a payment which I had given my word to make that day. Everybody got up and accompanied me to the door. I entered my carriage, and the guests sat down again to dinner. But at the first sign of starting my anguish grew so great that I gave a piercing cry, which was heard in the dining-room, and the company were about once more to rush out of the house. In the mean time I had left the carriage and shut myself up in a parlour on the ground-floor. My attendants persuaded the guests that I was gone, and that it was the cry of a child they had heard. I then took courage, and drove off to St. Sulpice, where my confessor was awaiting me. There, though greatly agitated, I began my confession. After an interview of three hours, my confessor, pitying the state I was in, put me off to another day. I returned to my house, where I was only to stay four days longer. A sense of intense desolation came over me. I was bewildered; I trembled. I asked myself, like St. Augustine, 'Shall you indeed be able to do without all these possessions, all these comforts? without all these luxuries and pleasures which have hitherto

filled you with delight? Will you abandon this little palace to go and live in a dismal cell? Will you take up with a mode of life so monotonous and so obscure, one which you have hitherto held in abhorrence, and that for the whole remainder of your existence?"

"But I got over those terrible moments. At last the day of my departure arrived. M. Sanguet, my curé, had for a long time kept out of my way—I had so often turned into ridicule his pious exhortations. But when I told him the great mercy God had shown me his joy was great. I passed a part of the night in writing to the persons with whom I had professional engagements, and to the father of my adopted child, to whom I sent back the boy with a sum of money. I left the letters with orders that they should not be sent till twelve o'clock at noon; and that whoever asked for me should be told that I was gone away for a long time. Then at five o'clock in the morning I left my home, never to return to it again. But I was not agitated by the same struggles I had lately gone through. I went out with the same tranquillity with which I now leave my cell to go to the choir; just sixteen months after that first Mass at the Franciscan church! In the same composed state of mind I arrived at Versailles, and waited on the late Cardinal de Fleury and the Duc de Gesvres, who had been my constant protectors, and of whom I now took leave. From their apartments I went to the king's chapel to hear Mass. While I was there it came into my mind that there was in the chateau a lady whom I had grievously offended; and as I came out of the chapel I hastened to her rooms; but, in order to avoid the *éclat* which the first burst of her feelings might have given rise to, I sent to request an interview with her in one of the ground-floor parlours, where I was waiting. As soon as she came in, I closed the door and threw myself at her feet. The suddenness of this action took from her the power of speech. Still in the attitude of a suppliant, I implored her to grant me a generous pardon. I told her that I was about to retire from the world to do penance, and that I had thought it right to begin by fulfilling the most difficult of the

Gospel precepts. This lady, who had been taken quite aback at first by the suddenness of my appearance, and had imagined herself the subject of an illusion, now began to recover her presence of mind, and said to me every thing most harsh which a woman cruelly wounded in her feelings might be supposed to think of. After listening to her some time without making any reply, always humbly kneeling at her feet, I said that I had not come there to justify myself, but simply to implore her pardon; that if she granted it, I should go away happy; that if, on the contrary, she refused it to me, God would be satisfied with my submission, and not with her refusal. At these words she held out her hand, desired me to sit down, and we were reconciled.

"I left Versailles without taking any food. The action I had been enabled to perform had sufficiently refreshed me. I went back to Paris to the community of St. Perpetua, where I had a little room prepared for me, in which I was to remain until the inventory of my furniture was completed, and various other arrangements made.

"As I entered that first place of retreat, what happened visibly to St. Paul seemed invisibly to take place in me. Scales fell from my eyes, and I felt as if transformed into a totally new creature. Once in that little room at the top of the house, I felt as if I had reached heaven! The past seemed to vanish away. My house, my property, my friends, my pleasures, no longer dwelt in my thoughts. The tranquillity and interior peace which I enjoyed almost led me to feel as if my life, up to that moment, had been one long unquiet dream. My cousin, whose tears were flowing fast, and who could not bear to take leave of me, fearing to let me remain alone, and perhaps to find me dead the next morning, could not understand my eager desire to send her away, in order to enjoy at leisure the new blessing of solitude. I told the Superioress that I had taken a collation in the morning, and that I begged she would let me have for supper what had been left from the dinner of the Community. There was some stewed carp, which I ate with the greatest appetite, strange to say. For the preceding three months I had not been able

to keep any food on my stomach, not even a little broth. Some rice with gravy, which I had taken the night before for supper, had made me sick : and now I not only digested quite well this warmed-up bit of fish, and a few walnuts for dessert, but I slept all night as soundly as a child of eight years old ; and this has been the case ever since.

"As soon as my retirement became known, various reasons were assigned for it, according to the temper of people's minds. The world found it difficult to believe that, in the prime of life—I was thirty-one years of age—and in the full tide of passion, I should have taken, of my own free choice, a decision so utterly at variance with my past life. My furniture was put up to auction. This sale lasted a fortnight ; during which time all Paris came to convince itself of the reality of my disappearance ; and all who came went away touched by a sense of the great mercy God had shown me. My kinswoman, who had undertaken the charge of my worldly affairs, was closely questioned as to my place of retreat. Refusing to disclose it, she was requested to convey to me a letter, and greatly entreated not to fail to deliver it into my hands. This proved to be from a friend, who exhorted me not to persist in a course which I had evidently adopted without sufficient reflection, particularly considering the agreeable position I occupied, the difficulty I should find in retracing my steps, and the inevitable regrets that would follow. Many examples were adduced abundantly calculated to frighten me from my resolution, and to shake my courage, if Almighty God had not supported me by His grace. As it was, it is easy to suppose what my answer must have been.

"Providence had in numerous instances preserved me in a remarkable manner from accidents to which I was every day exposing myself, in spite of the wise remonstrances of persons eminent for their rank, age, and virtue. When they inquired if I approached the Sacraments, 'O dear, no,' I used to answer. 'And why not?' 'Why, because I do not choose to commit a sacrilege, or to give up my pleasures until I reach the age of forty-five.' 'But have you no remorse?' 'Not I! What harm do I do? I do not

injure any one, that I know of. As to a future paradise, I leave it to those who do not know how to enjoy the present. I am satisfied with the pleasures this world affords, and do my best to enjoy them.' Horrible infatuation! fatal blindness! which makes me shudder when I recall it. And it is on this sensual, reckless creature that the Almighty has vouchsafed to look with pity, and by that powerful glance to restore her to herself. For He had given me, at the outset, a soul capable of good, an upright, sincere, and compassionate heart, well inclined towards virtue, and full of a just horror of disgraceful vices. But, as I said before, the poverty of my family had caused my education to be neglected ; and young, free from all restraints, with headlong passions, and without any means of support, ruin and dishonour were, as it were, forced upon me. God knows how much suffering it cost me to forego virtue. He knows that at the age of nineteen, when I was in Flanders, I promised Him, during a severe illness I had—and most sincerely I promised it—that I would give up the dangerous profession I was engaged in, if only I could secure a pension of 200 francs. It might have been done. It ought to have been done. God forgive those who refused to do it. Poverty had alone in the first instance thrust me into the land of perdition, for none of my relations had lived in any but a simple and Christian manner of life, except my father, who, through his extravagance, reduced me at the age of seventeen, with, as I have been told, a good figure and a comely face, to the most embarrassing straits. I had a horror of vice, and, consequently, felt shocked when it was proposed that I should go upon the stage. But I was told that this was a prejudice which only existed now amongst the common people and vulgar bigots ; that the court and the town were of quite another way of thinking, and looked very favourably upon persons who exercised so useful and so agreeable an art. Young people are easily persuaded ; but experience has taught me how inevitable is the ruin of those who choose this profession, unless they exercise the strictest watch over themselves, and guard at every turn against the dangers that surround them. Only consider what a

life it is! No occupation but the exercise of the memory; wealth, luxuries, amusement of every sort! The last three years that I was on the stage brought me in, free from all deductions, forty thousand francs. What a temptation for those who think of nothing but the present moment; and what a miracle of grace it is that withdraws a soul from so voluptuous an existence, especially one in the prime of life, and with passions at their height! I must admit, however, that I have known persons in that line whose conduct was as irreproachable as their talents were remarkable; but I, alas! was not of that number; I own it, to my shame and to the greater glory of God, whose grace is all the more evident in my conversion, that He chose for the display of its irresistible power the most unworthy of subjects; and I have to thank Him for this particular grace that since the day I abandoned the world up to this moment, I have never regretted its enjoyments, in spite of all the trials I have had to go through; and the violent efforts I had to make in order to subdue my overweening sensibility, which so reacted on my constitution that my hair and my eyebrows turned from black to white in a very short space of time."

The Carmelite nun never lost those brilliant powers of conversation for which the woman of the world had been famous. Her language remained what it had been, clear, forcible, graphic, animated; but whereas her words had formerly deluded whilst they fascinated her hearers, now they lured them to the love of God and the practice of virtue. In her old age she became blind, but there was no darkness on her spirit even then. She went about her duties as cheerfully as ever. She suffered no one to help her. The energy of her natural character, sanctified by grace, gave her the will and the power to accomplish to the last every obligation; whilst the tenderness of her heart, increasing with her years, made her an example of that charity which can never hear of suffering without seeking to relieve it.

A strange circumstance in *Sœur Augustine de la Miséricorde's* history was the intercourse which took place between the Queen of France

and herself during the latter part of her life. She had a nephew, an eminent violin-player, who directed the orchestra of the *Théâtre Français*. Deeply impressed with a sense of the dangers of any employment connected with the stage, she felt very anxious to withdraw him from its influence, and wrote to the pious queen of Louis XV. entreating her to admit this young man into her private band, and eloquently dwelling on the motives which prompted this request. The desire in itself was sufficient to engage the queen's sympathy, and she readily acceded to the petition of *Sœur Augustine*. The manner in which she expressed her thanks so charmed her royal correspondent, that an interchange of letters of a religious character established itself between them.

The night before her death, which took place at the convent of the Carmelites at Lyons in the year 1757, the nun dictated to the Sister who was sitting up with her eight lines of poetry addressed to her royal friend, entreating her prayers, and commending herself to her compassionate recollection.

PART II. CHAPTER X.

M. DE LA BOURDONNAIS was governor-general of the Isles de France and Bourbon in the year 1739. He had every thing to organize in these colonies. The administration of justice, the observance of order, commerce, and industry; and his mode of government drew down blessings upon him. In the war of 1743 between France and England he went to the assistance of Dupleix, Governor of Pondicherry, besieged the English in Madras, and forced them to capitulate. Madras, according to the terms of the capitulation, was to be restored to the English on the payment of a ransom. Dupleix, who had possession of Madras, refused to ratify this treaty, and a dispute arose, in consequence, between him and La Bourdonnais, which proved fatal to the latter. Indignant at the bad faith of Dupleix, he left Madras and returned as a private individual to the Isle de France, where a new governor, chosen by the imperious Dupleix, was already in authority. La Bourdonnais came back to France in 1748.

to answer in person the accusations of powerful enemies, excited by his persecutor. He was shut up in the Bastille, where he remained several years without being able to get even a hearing in his own defence. His innocence

was at last admitted, and he was set at liberty in 1752, but he was utterly ruined, and died in 1755, after a long and painful illness.*

* Dictionnaire Universel d'Histoire et de Géographie.

THE END.

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